

THE
Great Evil
OF
PROCRASTINATION
OR,
The Sinfulness and Danger of
Defering Repentance.
In Several
DISCOURSES.

By *Anthony Walker*, D. D. Rector
of *Fyfield* in *Essex*.

L O N D O N,

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the *Kings Arms* in *S. Paul's*
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TO THE
HONOURABLE
THE
LADY
Frances Shane.

Good Madam.

I Easily foresee your *Ladyship*,
will be somewhat surprized to
find your *honourable Name* pre-
fixt to so inconsiderable a Piece;
And I confess you may be justly
empted to think, what the great
Augustus said to him, who entertain-
ed him with a slender Supper, and
with

The Epistle Dedicatory.

with rancid Oyl: I knew not before that you and I were so familiarly acquainted, and it may increase your wonder to find your *Name* before the Sermons preach'd at their *Funerals*, whose very Names 'tis like you never heard before.

For the first, I acknowledge I have much cause to wish the *Present* I make you, were more proportionable to your *Ladyships* merit, and more worthy your Acceptance, but the less it deserves, the more it needs the shelter of such a *Patronage*, and how mean, and even affectedly plain, soever the manner of handling them is, the Truth and Duties treated of are of great concern and moment, and highly useful and necessary; and though as to the main, they come too late, (which is your *Ladyships* Praise and Happiness) to assist and direct you; your *early Piety*, and *eminent Vertue*, being already so far advanced, in what they are designed to excite in others: Yet they may

Comfort

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Comfort you, and *Incourage* your *Progress* in that good course, you have so far, and so happily proceeded in already, and may remain as a *Testimony* of the just Value I have for that serious Strictness you own and practise, in the *Work* our great *Master* hath given us to do: and wise Vigilance you use to be found so doing, whensoever He shall come to call you, and may gratify my innocent *Ambition*, to let others know the *Honour* you have allowed me in your *Friendship*.

As to the second, tis true the occasion of printing them is wholly owing to *two Funerals*, but this was meerly *accidental*, for they were extorted from me, by those who were indeed *Auditours* at Church, but not *Guests* at the Funeral, and therefore I have divested them of that *Character*, by omitting the *Testimonies* I then gave to the Memory of my *Friends*, that that might give no *Diversion* to the main Design.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

But *Madam*, I fear your *Ladyships* quicker thoughts will start a third Objection, more difficult than either of the former; that is, suspect I deal with you, like some *non-solvent Debtor* with his impatient Creditor, design to while you off with this poor Trifle, instead of paying the Debt you have so long expected, and so often demanded, that is, the fuller Account of the Life of your *incomparable Aunt*, and the Collection of her *excellent Papers*.

Madam, I must own my self indebted to your *Ladyship* in this particular, as also to the Expectations and Desires of many other worthy persons, to whom the short *Memoirs* annexed to her *Funeral Sermon* have been so useful, and therefore so acceptable. And therefore I ingeniously confess, I think my *best Plea* will be to plead guilty of too much Delay, though I want not just Excuses to alleviate the Fault: but I rather choose to renew my
pro-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Promise of the speediest *Diligence*, when this small Work hath past my Hands, to *reassume* and finish what I had so many Months since made a good Progress in, and by Gods Permission and Assistance shall draw the Portraiture of that great *modern* Pattern of *Piety*, out of her own Papers ; shewing the Steps by which, and Method in which that *blessed Saint* arrived at that eminent Height, in the power of Godliness, and kept her self in the Love of God. And I hope I shall not again desist from that Undertaking, till your good *Ladyships* Desires be gratified, and Commands obeyed in that particular, as they shall be with all sincerity and readiness in all things else (for I know you can injoy nothing but what is Just and Honourable)

By good Madam, your very good Ladyships most Faithful, and most Obedient Servant

A. Walker.

March, 9. 1680.

An

A N
ADVERTISEMENT

To the
Christian Readers,

Especially

His own Parishioners, concerning
the Publication of these Sermons.

Most Loving, and much Beloved
Neighbours.

I *T will, 'tis like, seem strange to
you, that I single out these plain
Sermons to be made publick, ra-
ther than any of those many I have
delivered to you in the long course of
my Ministry; and some of which 'tis
possible*

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possible you may judge more worthy of the Light, and would have rather chosen for your Use ; It is fit therefore I give you an account of the Publishing these. Let me therefore first assure you, it was not Originally my own Inclination which led me to it, but the earnest Intreaties of others.

And how stale soever this Pretence is, yet when ever it is true and real, (as 'tis very much so in my present Case) it retains its weight, and is a just Apology, at least as much as such an Undertaking needs.

Being sent for in the latter part of the last Month, to Preach a Funeral Sermon in London, for a very kind and worthy Friend, I was desired by one of his neer Relations to Print it, which I resolutely refused ; requesting and obtaining to be excused, without Unkindness or Offence taken. But though I had silenced the first Motion, I found it harder to resist a second, for before I left the City, I was set upon by one, who heard Occasionally,

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as not Concerned in the Funeral, who prest me with so much earnestness in his own Name, and as he told me, in the Name of many others who engaged him in it, for the first, and in Discourse, for the second also, Preached at the same Church upon the like Occasion, some while since, adding an Offer to pay the Charge of the Impression, which though kindly meant, I judged indecent to accept of. We parted without my yeilding farther, or promising more than that I would consider of it: which some days after my Return I did accordingly.

In this Deliberation, I well knew the plainness of these Sermons, and how unfit they are to bear their Censure, whom nothing pleases but height of Phanſy, sublime Notions, and elaborate Periods. On the other side I could not deny the Weight of their honest Argument, who desired to have them. viz. The Benefit they reap by hearing them, and the desire and hope that themselves with many others might

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might reap more by reading them. Hereupon I thought the Hazard of my Reputation, (as to Eloquence and Learning) was but a small Stake to be ventured against the hopes of doing good to Souls, and might be safely ventured, and would be profitably lost, if the other were attained and won. And for the probability of that I concluded the Judgment of the Hearers was not to be despised; For if our Church allow, (as it doth allow) a Judgment of Discretion to private Men in greater Matters, much more may they claim it in what so nearly concerns themselves: as to know what most Convinces, Instructs, Affects, and edifies them.

'Tis true, I confess, the Preacher best knows what Pains and Study his Composures cost him, and is highly concerned not to do Gods Work negligently, nor offer to him what cost him nothing, yet for all that, the Hearers best know what sinks deepest into their Hearts, and most powerfully awakens them,

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them, and draws them from Sin to God. As the Cook may best compute the Charge in the Kitchen, and what Cost and Art was bestowed in dressing of the Feast, yet the Guests at the Table are better Judges what pleases their Pallates, agrees with their Stomachs, and by an easy Digestion turns to good Nourishment, and ministers both Health and Strength, as that often doth, which wants the highest Seasoning. Plain and honest Christians like their Spiritual Food never the worse, though it be not disguised like an Oleo or French Dish, till they cannot know what's set before them. And St. Paul who had good Skill, as well as good Authority in these Matters, exhorts us to strive to Excell, to the edifying of the Church, rather than to be Barbarians to our Hearers, and leave them so to us, though they should admire us much, for understanding us little, or not at all.

When such Thoughts as these, had inclined me to Gratify the desires of
the

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the two former, I concluded to add the third, which had been acceptable to some of your selves. And I hoped they all together might be useful to you, for whose Sakes I chiefly esteem myself to live and work.

The Scope and Substance of them all, is ultimately the same, and like Lines drawn from distant and opposite Poynts, they touch and end in the same Centre, against Procrastination, or delaying a sound and thorough Turning unto God. And indeed this is so useful and necessary a Point, that there is no String I have so often toucht upon in my Ministry, and have had I confess, some remote Thoughts of Publishing for your Benefit, no less than twelve Discourses upon several Texts, handling the same Design with great Variety, even as these three do at present.

*And I will neither be afraid, nor ashamed to Whisper to you, though some over-hearing me should make a bad use of it, what hath caused me to
bend*

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bend my Ministry so frequently this way.

When I had been some time engaged in the Sacred Office, (though I began neither hastily nor early) having, I hope from God, a great sense of the Weight of that Imployment on my Heart, and desire to do good to Souls, and being conscious to myself of my Inabilities, amongst other Means I used to acquire some Sufficiency, one was to enquire of the most Learned, Grave, Conscientious, and Experienced Ministers for Direction; and one Query I propounded was, what Subjects, or what Texts, they had found most useful, and most successful, to Awaken, Convince, and Convert their Hearers. To which a very Holy, Learned, Aged, and Experienced Minister replied, by naming a Text against Procrastination; adding he never found his Ministry so successful upon any, as upon that Subject, upon which very Text I have preached many Sermons since, and never

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ver any with more Approbation or Acceptance, and I humbly hope not without Benefit to many Souls. This was the first Occasion which led me to so frequent Preaching upon Texts, from whence I might pertinently press you to speed in the Work of God, and to discover the Sin and Danger of Delay. But I have had two great Arguments since to confirm me in this Practice; the one from a great Example, the other from a very comfortable Experience.

The Example is that of the never enough Celebrated, Apostolical Divine and Preacher, the Holy and Blessed Archbishop Usher, who in those useful Sermons, preacht at Oxford, though Printed but from imperfect Notes, taken from his Mouth, and now in the last Edition added to his Sum and Substance of Christian Religion, in which he seems to design a gradual chaining such Texts together, as may bear Discourses tending to lead men from a State of Nature, through
Grace

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Grace to Glory begins with Heb. 4.7. He limiteth a certain Day, saying to Day, &c. Upon which he hath two Sermons Intituled Speedy Conversion, the only means to prevent Imminent Destruction, as if he had told them all his following Labours would be lost, and do them no good, if they did not yield first to cast off their Delays, &c.

The Second is from my own Experience, the most signal Seal and Crown God ever vouchsafed to honour my Ministry by, being gained in the pressing the same Argument.

*This I tell you with innocent Freedom, to beget in you an esteem of this Subject, men seldom profiting by what they undervalue. And though God confines us not to one Subject (nay expects we reveal to you the whole Counsel of his Will) much less confines himself, but works by what Instruments he pleases, and by what Tools he pleaseth in their Hands, yet a good Opinion of the Medicine helps the working, and is half a Cure, and we like a Remedy
that*

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that carries a *Probatum est*, hath been approved useful. There's more hope that may help us, which hath been helpful unto others; 'Tis good being in Gods Way, and not only our Expectations may be raised, but our Faith strengthened for receiving good by those Means, by which others have received it already.

I therefore Exhort, Beseech, and Admure you by all the most Serious and Sacred Words I can use to you, by all the Awe wherewith you Revere Gods Authority, and by all Submissive Gratitude, by which you Prize the conduct of his wise and faithful Methods and Counsels, and by the quickest Dence you can as wise Men, have of your infinite and eternal Interests, as ever you hope to see Gods Face in Peace, or escape his everlasting Wrath, and would not instead of lifting up your Heads with Boldness, and exceeding Joy at the coming of our Lord, cry to the Rocks to fall upon you, to hide and cover you from his Presence. Rouse up your
selves,

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selvet, shake off your loytring Humour
cast away every Weight that Cloggs
you in your Speed; and what you do,
do quickly. Who knows what a Day
may bring forth? therefore now or ne-
ver, now is the accepted Time, now
is the Day of Salvation. Therefore
seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near, there is
a time when he will not be found. They
shall seek me early but shall not find
me, the Sluggards early is too late
with God; God hath long waited to
be Gracious, but he will not alwaies
wait, nor shall his Spirit alwaies strive.
God hath long expected you, he thinks
long, and even longer for your Return.
How long ye simple ones, how long
will ye love Vanity; how long shall
vain Thoughts lodge within thee, wilt
thou not be made Clean, when shall it
once be? Make not God lose his
Longing lest abused Patience kindle
into such Fury as shall burn to the ne-
thermost Hell, and none can quench it.

'Tis hard to stop my running Pen

in

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in such a Current, but I will check it, and refer you to the Sermons for more pressing Arguments. These things have been often echoed in your Ears, enough to make them tingle; I now put them into your Hands and Houses, and lay them before your Eyes, read them attentively, consider them Wisely, practise them Faithfully, and Pray earnestly that God would bless them to you, as I shall not cease to do in your behalf, and set this little Book in some conspicuous Place, that it may be your Remembrancer when you do but glance your Eye upon it; and as often as you see it, ask your Consciences, have I yet obeyed the Errand, on which God sent that little Messenger? Am I ready for Christ; have I finished the work God sent me into this World for; bear I such Fruit as God expects from every Tree he plants in the Vineyard of his Church?

Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has so loved us, as to give us his dearly beloved Son

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to Dye for us, and will speedily send him again to Judge us. That great lover of Souls who hath sworn he desires not the Death of a Sinner, but would have all Men to be Saved, and come to the Knowledg of the Truth, in-able you in this your Day, to know the things which belong to your Peace, before they be hidden from you; that when ever he shall come who hath said so often behold I come quickly, you may lift up your Heads and not be ashamed, and your Hearts may Eccho with Faith and Joy, even so come Lord Jesus. So Prayes, dear Neighbours.

Your faithful Monitor, and Willing
Servant in the Things of Christ,

Anthony Walker.

Fyfield March 9, 1681.

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planted, &c.

*In which the whole Parable is succinctly
Opened and Applied, and speedy
Fruitfulness proved the only means
to prevent cutting down.*

A

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

*At St. Buttolphs Algate, on
Friday the 18th of February
168^o, at the Funeral of Mr.
Nathaniel Duckfeild Citizen
of London, and Inhabitant of
the said Parish.*

St. Luke 12. 40.

Be ye therefore Ready also.

A*T* Is the great Design of every faith-
ful Minister, to save himself and them
that hear him, and nothing more natural-
ly

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ly contributes to that good Work, than a serious preparedness of Heart on the part of the Hearers : and on the Preachers, a Word seasonably fitted to the Occasion by which God calls them to attend to it. And if any thing next to the Grace of God, can awaken men, to awful Apprehensions of the World to come, 'tis convincing Evidence of their uncertain Continuance in this World : and unavoidable necessity of their certain Departure out of it. And this is no where written in more legible *Characters* than on the *Hearses* of our Friends with whom we have had familiar and daily Conversation, and were a few Days since as likely to have attended us to our *long Homes*, as we were to follow them to their *Beds of Silence*. And for this Reason the wise Man tells us it is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting : For that is the end of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart. Eccl. 7. 2

Supposing therefore that your Eye hath affected your Heart, and that this solemn and mournful Object of our worthy and obliging Friend, now shut up from us in the close Confinement of a Coffin, hath disposed your Hearts to receive what is Fit and Reasonable to be learn'd from it

Th

Of Deferring Repentance. 3

The Work on my part is to render my Discourse futable. That the *Ordinance* we are exercised in, may answer the *Providence* which brought us to it. That there may be an *Harmony* in the parts which are to be joyned into one piece. For God hath two *Books*, one of his *Works*, another of his *Word*. Both described by *David* in *Pfal. xix.* and we are to turn a *Page* in either of them: To learn a Lesson in the *School* of Nature, and in the *School* of Grace. And I desire these may answer each other, as the *Windows* did in *Solomons Temple*, Light over against Light.

Our *Text*, our *Lesson*, or if you will our *Sermon*, from the Book of Providence, is not only to view a man like our selves, *Mortal* and actually dead: But a man, not past the vigour of his years and strength, and t'other day in perfect health summoned to his *Trial*, to stand at *Christ's Tribunal*, to receive his final doom and sentence. And I think no *Text* in Scripture *Ecchoes* more vocally to this than the words I have read. Be ye therefore Ready also. The illative Particle, therefore hath an aspect also on the *Context*, and it looks both backward and forward, to what went before in the 37.

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and 39. *verses*, and what follows after in this.

In the Verses pointed at, before the *Text*, are laid down, the blessedness of the ready, and the misery of the unready. Rewards and Punishments are the *Instruments* of Government. Hopes and Fears are the Spurs and Bridles to quicken to Good, to restrain from Evil. Therefore if you would enjoy the Good 'tis Natural to hope for and desire, or escape the Evil 'tis Natural to fear and fly from. *Be ready.* The blessedness of the ready is described by the honour every such servant shall receive from his Lord and Master when he comes, *He will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve him.* And for greater assurance, like *Pharaohs dream*, 'tis doubled, v. 37. begins *blessed are these servants*, and v. 38. ends *blessed are those servants.* The misery of the not ready is described by the condition of an Householder surprized by *Robbers*, who break through his House, with the supposed consequences take away his Goods and Life, so that the sum is, seeing such ready servants shall assuredly be *blessed.* And such unprepared Householder shall be miserably *ruined.* Let others happiness be your encouragement. And

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And let others harms be your warnings that ye be ready.

But the duty is of such vast importance that 'tis prest yet farther with a Reason at the back of it. For the son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not. 'Tis the Motto and brand of a Fool to say *non putaram*, I never thought of this, excuseth therefore this *stupidness*, shake off this *folly* and bethink your selves, there's no watch in the night, there's no hour in the day when Christ may not come, therefore be ever preparing and prepared to meet him.

I have thus brought the occasion and the Text together; and led you through the Context to the Words, as clearly and as briefly as I could. So that nothing remains but to make the best improvement of them that I can. *Be ye ready.*

First, 'Tis *vox Respectiva*. The very word implies a respect to somewhat. He that is *ready*, is ready for some person or some thing. And 'tis so obvious the naming of it is next to needless. 'Tis for the coming of our Lord.

Secondly, 'Tis *vox Præceptiva*. 'Tis a word of command from our Great Lord and Master, making that our duty, which is our greatest interest and happiness.

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Thirdly, 'tis *vox Directiva*. Directing us to that, in which our true our only wisdom, which makes wise unto Salvation doth consist.

Fourthly, 'Tis *vox Comprehensiva* a very large and comprehensive word in two regards, first, including all things which concern our being Good and Happy. For to be ready for Christ, implies our being compleat in Christ. There's a receiving fulness of Grace from him.

2. It implies our going to Heaven with him. *For they that were ready went with him in to the marriage*, Matth. xxv. 10. there's our happiness.

Secondly, It comprehends all persons, ye, that's a'l: this indefinite is Universal: as, *Thou*, in the Commandments is every one: So here *Ye* signifies *All*.

These put together fall naturally and without any straying into this Doctrine.

'Tis every mans indispensable Duty and highest Interest to be presently Ready for Christs coming. A Principle of Duty to Gods Authority requiring it. And a Principle of Wisdom for our safety necessitating it; are the two unshaken *Pillars* on which this Truth is so firmly built, that it can never be moved. No *Cavils* from men or Devils can overturn it; no evasion

evasion can ever dispence with mens Obligation to it. But as long as man is bound to do what God bids. Or believe what God tells him. As long as 'tis the part of a wise man to escape the utmost misery, and to desire and pursue after his ite happiness and glory. So long will this truth abide more fixed than the *Earth*. Yea establisht in (and as) the very *Heavens*. So that I shall say no more for its confirmation in this place, but proceed, 1. To shew wherein this *Readiness* consists. 2. What is required on our parts to attain to it. 3. Press the performance with most cogent Arguments.

But because a wise *Builder* will carry off the Rubbish, and clear his Ground before he lays his Foundation, I shall

First, Negatively shew you wherein *Readiness* doth not consist, or what is not sufficient to make you so. And this is very needful to be done, because *prepossession* of the mind by error, hinders the Truth from entring, and leaves no room in the Heart to entertain it. And too many are prone to rest satisfied with that which will deceive them, supposing 'tis enough to make their condition safe and happy, and would go farther, did they not verily think they had gone far enough.

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enough. Many saith *Seneca* had become wise men, had they not thought themselves already such. + And *Gregory Nazianzen*, the greatest hindrance of proficiency, is an *Opinion* of sufficient proficiency. 'Tis no wonder those *Martiners* strike Sail, who think themselves in safe Harbour. Nor that he sets by his *Staff*, and takes up his rest who verily believes, he is at the end of his journey.

Now, to pass by the *excuses*, many make for neglecting to be ready, there seem to be six things which men are prone to trust to, as sufficient to make their condition good and safe, which really are not so.

1. Their being born of *Godly Parents*.
2. Being of very good *Natures*, or sweet *Dispositions*.
3. Being *Baptized* and using and injoying the means of *Grace*.
4. Outward *Conformity* to the Letter of the Law in the practice of *Moral Vertues* and Duties.
5. Being of the true *Church*, or of such a *Party* or persuasion.
6. Believing in *Christ* or presuming rather that they do so, without those *Fruits* which prove their Faith to be Holy and Lively.

It would require more time, than our present streights will allow, to speak fully to all these, it must suffice to *Nonsuit* every of these *Pleas*, in a word,

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word, to undeceive those who are prone to deceive themselves with *shadows*, and *appearances*, instead of *Realities*. For 'tis an *error* very incident to weak and partial minds, (as we are all prone to be partial to our selves) to judge every thing which is good, to be enough, and good enough. Which is a great mistake as you may be easily convinced, by a plain *similitude*. Your *mony* may be very good, both for *Mettal* and *Stamp*, and as current as any in the Kingdom. Yet twenty Shillings of such *mony* will not pay a Debt of ten pounds. What's the reason? Not because the *mony* is not good; but because there is not enough of it. So in our present Case, these things I have named will not make us ready for Christ, why so? Not because they are not good in their place and kind, they are good in *tanto*, but not in *toto*, but because they are not good enough in *degree* and *measure*. Therefore I beseech you think not I condemn or dispraise them; or discourage your attainment of them. I only warn you not to rest in them as sufficient, to make you ready for Christ, or fit to go to *Heaven*. For this they cannot do.

First, not the being born of Godly Pa-

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rents, tho it is a great mercy to be so, and is attended with many *advantages*, and many have put confidence in it. How often do we hear it from the *Jews* *n.cuths* we are *Abrahams* *seed*, we have *Abraham* to our *Father*, *John* *viii.* 43, 39, and *St. John Baptist* warning them against it, *think not to say within your selves we have Abraham to our Father*, *Matth.* *iii.* 10. intimates their hearts were full of it, and placed much confidence in it. But our *Saviour* tells those very men *John* *viii.* 44. *Ye are of your Father the Devil.* And *St. John Baptist* call these a *generation of vipers.* 'Tis not generation from the best men, but regeneration from the good Spirit, must do our business, *non nascimur, sed renascimur Christiani.* Men beget children not as good men but as men, and therefore beget not good men, but meer men. As *Circumcised Israelites* begot children which needed *Circumcision.* And the best drest *Wheat* grows up again with *Chaff.* So those whose Parents were *Circumcised* in heart, come into this world with a *Foreskin* on their hearts, which must be taken off. What ever becomes of the dispute of the *Original* of the *Soul.* 'Tis without dispute that *Grace* in the *Soul* is not by *traduction* but by *infusion* and acquisition.

Second-

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Secondly, Not good *Nature*, or the sweetest disposition. I deny not but there is a vast difference betwixt the tempers of men. As great as anything can make, but the Sovereign Grace of God. Some are such *Ishmaels*, such *Nabals*, *Caligulas*. Others such *Jonathans*, *Titus's* the darlings and delights of mankind. So sweet, so affable, kind, obliging, ready to good, that nothing below the *Image* of Christ is more lovely than the impress of such a temper. But still the best of Nature is but Nature, and the Fruit of the unpun'd Vine will be but wild Grapes, and by Nature we are all *Children of Wrath*. Not Sons of God or Heirs of Heaven.

Thirdly, Not being *Baptised*, and enjoying and using all the means of Grace. I tell you therefore first 'tis a very great Mercy and Favour of God to allow thee these *priviledges*. I tell you secondly, 'tis thy duty, and thou dost very well to attend constantly on them, 'tis well thou wert *Baptized*, thou dost well to hear the Word, pray to God, keep thy Church, &c. Yet I tell thee thirdly, thou mayest go to *Hell* after all this, yea and have a hotter place there, than one of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, than the men of *Sodom* and *Gemorrhah*, who never heard of, or

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injoy'd such things. Nay I tell thee fourthly, 'tis one of the commonest, and most dangerous practical errors of them within the Church, to think to Compound with God, and excuse themselves, for the neglect of the Duties those Priviledges oblige them to, by a formal using of these Priviledges. And therefore there is nothing in which the Scriptures are more expresse and copious, than in warning men against this mistake. And that both in the Old Testament and New. Jeremiah tells them, they trusted in lying words, who cryed the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord. And continued in their sins. Jer. vii. 4. to the 12. and Chap. ix. 26. He levels Judah and Israel for being Uncircumcised in heart with Egypt, Ammon, and Moab, who were Uncircumcised in Flesh. I beseech you read with attention, yea with fear and trembling the second Chapter to the Romans, especially from the 17. verse, and you will find that Circumcision may become Uncircumcision, and so Baptism as no Baptism. And that he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, but he that is one inwardly. And Circumcision which profits is not the outward in the Flesh and in the Letter: but in the Heart and in the Spirit. And St. Peter tells expressly that the

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the Baptism which saves is not the washing of the flesh: but when we can answer with a good Conscience the questions usually propounded in the Administration of it, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

So for Prayer: *Isaiah* supposes they may make long Prayers, whose hands are full of blood. And *David* that some mens Prayers may be turned into sin. And *Solomon* tells you that the Prayer of the wicked, and of him that turns away his ear from hearing the Law, shall be abomination. The blind man *John ix. 31.* could see the truth, that God heareth not sinners, such as allow themselves in sin. And *David* saith of himself, if I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear my Prayer. If thou hast gifts to Pray like an Angel, and yet livest like an Incarnate Devil, thou mayst indeed be Gods remembrancer. But 'tis but to put him in mind to take vengeance on thee. As the Philosopher said smartly to the wicked mariners, who began to Pray when a storm arose. Hold your peace, hold your peace, for the Gods will certainly destroy us, if they take notice you are hear. Not that I would discourage a *Simon Magus* to Pray to God. *Acts viii. 22.* But then let him repent of his wickedness. And take *Eliphaz's* Counsel

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See Job xxii. 23, 26. Put iniquity far from the Tabernacle. So mayst thou lift up thy Face unto God, and Pray unto him and he shall hear thee; tho sincere Prayer shall make thee leave sinning, or sin will make thee leave Praying sincerely. Yet many cry Lord, Lord, who shall never go to Heaven.

So for Hearing, Rom. ii. 13. Not the hearers of the Law, are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified. For whosoever heareth Christs sayings, and doth them is like to a wise man who buildeth his House upon a Rock. But he that Heareth and doth them not is like a foolish man which builds his House upon the Sand, and when the Floods beat upon it, it will fall, and great shall be the fall of it. Matth. vii. 24, 27. For they only are blessed who hear the word of God and keep it. Nor will the approving and praising of the Preacher, but the practice of his Doctrine, render yourselves approved, or turn to your praise with God, see Ezech. xxxiii. 31, 32.

So for the receiving the Holy Sacrament, tho that blessed Ordinance be too much and too shamefully neglected, yet mayst thou eat Christs Body; and drink his Blood Sacramentally, and swallow down the pledges of thy own Damnation
in

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in so doing. 1 Cor. xi. 29. and bring up-
on thy self the guilt of Christs Body and
Blood verse 27. Consider well 1 Cor.
x. 2. 5. For both the Sacraments. *They*
were all Baptised unto Moses in the Cloud,
and in the Sea, and did all eat the same spi-
ritual meat, and did all drink the same spi-
ritual drink, (for they all drank of that spi-
ritual Rock that followed them, and that
Rock was Christ. But with many of them
God was not well pleased. And seeing the
means are so evidently appointed for the
sake of the end, and to lead us to the
attainment of it. 'Tis matter of just
wonder, how men can so impose upon
themselves, as to rest in the means in-
stead of the end. The Stairs are the
means by which you ascend to your
Lodging Chamber, but if any man should
therefore strip himself and lye down up-
on the Stairs, he might find both a cold
and hard Lodging, how warm and soft
soever the Bed is which stands in the
Chamber at the Stairs head.

Fourthly, Not outward Conformity
to the Letter of the Law, in the pra-
ctice of *Moral Vertues and Duties.* Not
but that this is very amiable and very ne-
cessary, and cursed be the man that will
dispencc with himself or others to neg-
lect

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lect it : and it cannot, without great ignorance, or greater malice be charged on any, because they shew the insufficiency of this, and urge you to more. I confess an *Ungodly honest man* is half a *Contradiction*. But I declare a *Godly Knave* is a whole one. For he may be sincerely Just and Honest in his Dealings with men, who wants a sence of Religion towards God. But he is a gross *Hypocrite* towards God, who pretends to Religion, and allows himself to deal unjustly with his Neighbour. Not that I exclude the Duties of the first Table from being Moral, but in common speaking those of the Second are chiefly understood. And they are, *Naturâ notiora*, more easily discerned by the light of *Natural Conscience*, and he may see his duty in what is easily known, who sees it not in what is harder to discover. (*How shall he love God whom he hath not seen, who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen?*) But he is without excuse who pretends to know and do the hardest. And will neither know nor do the easiest.

A sober and honest Conversation in the sight of men is a *fair body* of a Christian but there must be a *Soul and Spirit* to enliven it, as he said to him, who wondered

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dered that a *Statue* with such perfect lineaments, could neither go nor stand. *Deest aliquid tuis.* There wants a living Principle within. With the putting off the Old man according to the Conversation, and putting on the new, there must be a renewing in the Spirit of the mind, Eph. iv. 23. Many Heathens excelled in the exercise of Vertues, *Aristides, Cato, Regulus.* And yet if you will believe St. *Augustine* they were but *splendida peccata*, shining sins, they wanted both right Principle and end, and the sprinkling with Christs Blood. We must add Faith to our Vertue, as well as Vertue to our Faith. See that you do the great things of the Law, but before you leave not undone the greater things of the Gospel. A lively work of Faith to purifie your hearts, unite you to Christ, and make you partakers of his Spirit for sound Regeneration, and through Conversion, without this you are undone for ever.

Fifthly, Not being of the true Church, or of this or that Party or Persuasion. 'Tis a wonder so many should be cheated with so groundless an error; not only Papists, who have an Hypothesis which tempts them to it, That the Faith of the Church, and Treasury of the Church, may

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may be Communicated to them by being *Members* of it. But many others crying *I am of Paul, I of Appollo, I of Cephas.* A true Son of the Church, one of the Godly Party, one of the Friends. But I beseech you take notice. 'Tis not being of the truest and best *Religion* in the world will save you, but being true to that *Religion*, and living up to it. *Salvation was of the Jews.* Theirs was the Religion God dispenc'd Salvation in, yet all *Jews* were not saved. *All are not Israel who are of Israel, nor all the children of Abrahams Faith, who were the children of his flesh.*

Surely Judas was of the true Church, when he was of our Lords own Family; and yet went thence to his own place, a place to which you would be loath to follow him. Be thy head never so *Orthodox*, as to the *Articles*, of Faith if thy life be *Hetodox* as to the Rule of Practice; the goodness of thy Faith will be so far from excusing the badness of thy Life, that it will greatly aggravate thy Condemnation; and the more clearly thou knowest thy *Masters will* and the more firmly thou believest it, with more stripes shalt thou be beaten for disobeying it. Tho bad Company occasions many mens damnation, and good Company may be an help to; yet never was it,

it, never shall it be a *cause* of any mans *Salvation*. I mean that he should be saved, meerly for professing the same *Religion*, with them who are saved, tho not for the Professing but Practising of their Religion.

Lastly, Not believing in *Christ*, or presuming rather they do so, without any *Fruits* of *Faith* to prove it true and lively. God forbid I should make any sinister reflections on the *Doctrine* of our *Church*, and a *Doctrine* so clear in *Scripture* as that of the *Justification* and *Salvation* of sinners by *Faith* in *Christ*, yea by *Faith* alone. God who regarded the lowliness of his hand maid, when his Son was Conceived: hath had regard to this humble lowly Grace, as to the Conceiving *Christ* in our Hearts. That *Christ* may dwell in your hearts by *Faith*. 'Tis appointed to receive *Christ* *Jesus*, and to make us the Sons of God by so doing. And whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. John iii. 16. I know no other way of *Salvation* for my self; I teach no other way to you, yet after all, I say to you, look well to your selves, that your *Faith* be *Faith* indeed, not a dead *faith*, not a bold presumption, not a self delusion.

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The stronger and purer the *Liquor* is with which the *Poyson* is mixed, the more dangerous will its *Operation* be. I fear the *Poyson* the *Devil* infuses in this Holy, this pure Doctrine of the Gospel, kills multitudes for want of caution. I beseech you therefore be very cautious lest you be deceived in your Faith. The question is not whether *Faith* will save thee and makes thee ready for Christ. But whether thou indeed have *Faith* that is true *Faith*. 'Tis certain *Faith* alone justifies a sinner: but as certain, that that *Faith* which is alone justifies no sinner. The *Eye* alone sees. The *Hand* alone works; but if the *Eye* or *Hand* be alone, that is, separated from the *Body*, they neither see nor work. Tho *Faith* justifies us as a passive Grace receiving Christ, and the gift of Righteousness by and with him; and Sanctifies as an active Grace; yet 'tis the same *Faith* that doth both, and if it do not both, it will do neither. With the same *Hand* we receive what is given us, and with the same *Hand* we work what is enjoined us. The same *Faith* that receives Christ as a *Saviour*, engages you to serve him as your *Lord* and *King*. And the same *Faith* which justifies your Persons, must Sanctifie your Natures,

Act.

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Act. xxvi. 18. *And purifie your hearts,*
Act. xv. 9. *And work by love,* and make
you new *Creatures* in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 17.
if it *ingraft* you into him; and will con-
strain you to live to him, if you do in
good earnest *believe* he dyed for you; and
if your *Faith* have not these *Fruits* to
prove it true and living, it makes you
not *ready* for Christ, thou rather *dreamest*
thou *believest* in Christ, than dost so real-
ly, and whilst thou art in this *slumber*,
thy *Lamp* will go out, like the *foolish*
Virgins, Matth. xxv. 8. and thou wilt
have nothing to meet Christ with when
ever he comes.

Thus have I shewed you *negatively*
what will not make you *ready* for Christ,
tho too many flatter and befool them-
selves that it will, and will not suffer
themselves to be convinc'd of their *error*
till it be too late to redeem and mend it.
I earnestly exhort you, and most heartily
beg of God you may never be found in
that number.

And now I proceed to the positive part,
to shew wherein *Readiness* for Christ con-
sists, And

First, To be ready for Christ is to be a
Good man, a Righteous man, an Holy up-
right Godly Man. One who desires to do
the

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the whole will of God sincerely : both by ceasing to do evil, and learning to do good, denying and abstaining from all known sin, and applying himself to perform all known Duties : with a *Conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.* To be heartily Religious, Just and Sober, *Crucifying the Flesh with its affections and lusts.* Walking before God with respect to all his Commandments, in a word, to be Christs true and faithful servant.

For the Scripture is expresse and plain, that God will do good to them that are good and upright in their hearts. Psal. cxxv. 4. That he will give eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for Glory and Immortality. Rom. ii. 7. and Christ himself hath told us that Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, Matth. vii. 21. and St. Paul. If ye live after the flesh ye shall dye : but if ye by the Spirit mortifie the deeds of the body ye shall live, Rom. viii. 13. And again. Be not deceived God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption : but he

he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life ever lasting. Gal. vi. 7, 8. And the terms upon which St. Peter assures you of entrance into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are that ye abound in Faith, Vertue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly kindness, Charity. 2 Pet. i. And David in Psalm xv. gives the description of a Citizen of Sion: who shall dwell in Gods Holy Hill, by the same measures. And in Gods name saith Psalm l. 23. To him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God. And lastly 'tis Christs promise. Where I am there shall also my servants be, John xii. 26. And indeed it is the Scope and import of the whole Scripture both Old Testament and New, to shew that wicked and bad men shall go to Hell, and only Righteous and good men shall go to Heaven. Psalm iv. 3. Know that God hath set apart him that is Godly for himself. But Psalm ix. 17. The wicked shall be turned into Hell. Ezech. xviii. 20. The Righteousness of the Righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. John v. 29. They that have done good shall come forth to the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the Resurrection of damnation.

For

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For we must all appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. V. 10.

And I beseech you, neither to censure, nor misinterpret, this method of proceeding; by beginning to declare in such general terms, wherein *Readiness* for Christ consists. But consider the wisdom of God leads me in it; for tho the *Scriptures* do treat of these things some times more accurately and distinctly, yet for the most part they speak of them in these general expressions. And that for Wise and Holy Reasons. For the *Scriptures* were written not only for the Wise and Learned, but for the unwise and Ignorant, for Babes in Christ and beginners, as well as for grown men and Proficients. For the *Lamb* to waid in, as well as for the *Elephant* to swim in. Now for the sake of the first sort, who are not able to discern critical differences of things: nor to comprehend the more mysterious and intricate expressions, nor to understand *Artificial* and *Figurative* words: in which some times the *Truths* of the *Gospel* are wrapt up and veiled: It seems very agreeable to the goodness of

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of God to condescend to the weakness and capacities of those, to whom he speaks.

And to propound the way of *Life* and *Death*, to *Heaven* and *Hell*, in such general and easie terms, as all may understand. And such as are suited to affect a Natural Conscience: and to be an initial and leading way to the receiving, what the Gospel speaks more distinctly and accurately to those, who are awakened to be inquisitive, and rendered capable of what is more high and difficult, by the use of general words, and easie to be understood: Such as these are, with which I have begun: To be *ready* for Christ, is to be a *good* man: for none but such shall go to *Heaven*.

Secondly, To be *ready* for Christ is to be a good Christian. And what that implies we shall best understand by our *Baptismal Covenant* in which we enter upon the profession of *Christianity*. Now as in that God promiseth to accept us as *Members* of his Son, to own us for his *Children* and make us *Inheritors* of the Kingdom of Heaven: so we on our parts engage and promise three things, first to renounce the *World* the *Flesh* and the *Devil*. Secondly to believe all the *Articles* of
of

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of the Christian Religion, viz. with an Applicatory Faith. Thirdly, to keep Gods Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life, and he that keeps this Covenant is a good Christian; and as a Child of God shall inherit his Kingdom: and is ready to go to it when ever Christ comes.

Now these three, answer the three great *Graces*, which are the condition of the *New Covenant*. Repentance, Faith, and new Obedience. . And tho the last is included in, and be reduceable to the first: because no man truly repents of past *disobedience*: who resolves not, and who endeavours not, to yield unreserved *obedience* for the future; and therefore the two former are oft put alone for the full and whole condition of the Gospel Covenant. *The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, repent and believe the Gospel.* Yet I hope we may inoffensively reckon them all three distinctly: especially considering that tho they all have a general respect to the whole *Holy Trinity*, yet they may not improperly be said to have a peculiar reference to the distinct Persons, to whose name we are expressly Consecrated in our *Baptism*. • The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Repentance towards God, that is the Father,

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Father, Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. So St. Paul expressly speaks, *Act. xx. 21.* New Obedience towards the Holy Ghost, who is the immediate Author of Sanctification, and to walk in newness of life is to walk in the spirit, *Gal. v. 25.* And to be led by the spirit, *Rom. viii. 14.*

If therefore thou wouldest be a good Christian, and as such ready for Christ.

First, With Holy shame and Godly sorrow turn from sin and creatures, in which thou hast too long sought satisfaction, to God as thy all-sufficient portion and happiness.

Secondly, Come to him by Christ the great and only Mediator, who hath made our peace with him, and wrought that reconciliation by which alone thou art capable of enjoying him.

Thirdly, yield up thy self to the conduct of the Holy Ghost, as thy Sanctifier, to enable thee both to believe, and to bring forth the Fruits of Faith, in new obedience, as testimonies of thy sincere thankfulness: love being best seen in keeping the Commandments.

Thirdly, to be ready for Christ, you must, 1. be Justified. 2. Sanctified. 3. Exert and exercise that Faith, by which thy person is Justified, and thy Nature sanctified,

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defined, in watching for, and preparing against Christs coming. The two former may be called our Habitual readiness, such as the Wise Virgins had even whilst they ~~slumbered~~ and ~~sleep~~. The third our actual Readiness, such as theirs was when they awaked, and trimmed their

~~lamps~~ and ~~follow~~ ~~not~~ ~~strayed~~ ~~ill~~
The two first put us into a safe state of Readiness for Christs coming, the third into a comfortable present disposition to meet him at his coming.

The first gives us a Title to Heaven. The second a fit qualification for Heaven, the third an immediate and proximate disposition for Heaven, and confident hope of our admittance into it.

The two former concern our dying without danger, the third our dying without fear of danger, willingly, joyfully, triumphantly. Singing with old Simeon *non dimittis* Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. And St. Pauls *Cupio dissolvi*, I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. And St. Johns *veni domine Jesu*, Even so come Lord Jesus come quickly.

A word of every of them, First to be ready for Christ, thou must be Justified to give thee Right and Title to Heaven. For

we are all by Nature Children of Wrath,
Eph. ii. 3. And can claim no inheritance
 but Hell, as our due. And we are held
 under an unalterable Covenant, *Dei*
and live, Rom. x. 5. Which exacts and
 will abate nothing of perfect personal
 Obedience; which God knows, and our
 selves must acknowledg we are far from
 having performed, or any ability to per-
 form: and an inexorable Law which de-
 nounceth a curse against *all that continue*
not in all that is written, Gal. iii. 10. And
 an inflexible Justice, which can neither be
 bribed nor forc'd. Not bribed because
 'tis Justice: not forc'd because 'tis Gods.
 And all these keep the passage to Heaven
 more strictly, than the Cherubim with the
Flaming Sword did that of the *Tree of*
Life: and there's no hope or possibility
 of getting in till these be satisfied,
 which in and of our selves we can ne-
 ver do, so *will no* *to* *be* *him* *blow* *to*
to *is* *an* *eternal* *and* *immutable* *God,*
 whoever is once a sinner, can never come
 to Heaven till his sin be pardoned and
 done away: and his person justified in
 the sight of God *in* *and* *his* *own* *spot*
in *if* *there* *were* *no* *other* *Texts* *in* *all* *the*
Bible, (tho there are abundance more of
 like import) that must be etazed and

cancelled, before an unpardoned sinner, as such, can have any hope. *Rom. iii. 23. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: Being justified freely by his Grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, &c.*

Now whether Justification be wholly comprehended in forgiveness of sin, as many great *Divines* do hold: or besides Pardon, it include somewhat which must render us *Righteous* in the sight of God: As neither fewer for number, nor less for name and note have taught, I list not to Dispute: *Polemical Divinity* fits not the Pulpit: and is never less seasonable than at a *Funeral*. Dust cast on fighting Bees soon ends the fray.

This dust of *Death* sprinkled amongst us should mind us of our *Work* or *Hives*. And wherein soever the strict notion of *Justification* doth consist, this I may say is without Controversie, that we must be pardoned and accepted as *Righteous* before we can stand in Gods sight: and both these we must have by Faith in Christ. His Blood and Obedience purchase both, and our Faith must receive them
and

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and apply them that we may be Justified.

First Pardon. Eph. i. 7. In whom we have redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses, Acts xiii. 38, 39. And 1 John i. 7. The Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin, and if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our sins: Chap. ii. 1, 2. And in the Institution of his Holy Supper he gives this Reason for the drinking of the Cup. Matth. xxvi. 27, 28. Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. And in Gal. iii. from the 5. to the 15. too long to be transcribed. God's Justifying the Heathen by Faith, and the Just's living by Faith, are argued from Christs being made a Curse for us.

Secondly, Righteousness: He is the Lord our Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. He was made sin for us; 1. A sin offering, That we might be made the Righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. As by the offence of

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one, judgment came upon all to condemnation: even so by the Righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, to Justification of life. For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made Righteous, Rom. v. 18, 19. Read the whole Chapter, not to say the whole Epistle, the chief Scope of which tendsthis way. 1 Cor. i. 30 Christ is made unto us of God Righteousness, which made St. Paul so earnestly desire to be found in him, not having his own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ. The Righteousness which is of God by Faith; Phil. iii. 9.

Secondly, We must be Sanctified by his Spirit, as well as Justified by his Merit. This must qualifie and make us fit for Heaven. The pure in heart shall see God. Mat. v. 8. And without Holiness none can see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. For into the New Jerusalem, shall in no wise enter, any thing that defileth; neither what soever worketh abomination or maketh a lye. Rev. xxi. 27.

Without being Sanctified no man is fit, 1. For the Place. 2. For the Company. 3. For the Work of Heaven.

First, Not for the place. 'Tis his Holy Heaven, Psalm xx. 6. All the Types
of

of it were Holy, *Paradise*, the *Tabernacle*, the *Temple*, yea the *Hill* on which it stood: even a temporary and transient manifestation of Gods Presence or Glory Consecrates the place: how much more Holy then is that place which is the *Habitation* of Gods Holiness and Glory as Heaven is called, *Isay* lxiii. 15. That part of the *Temple* where the *Ark* stood under the *Wings* of the *Cherubims*, the type of Gods constant residence (for the *Mercy Seat* was his *Throne*, and he dwelt betwixt the *Cherubims*) was called the *most Holy*, the *Holy of Holies*; the *Holiest* of all: how *Superlatively Holy* then must that place be, of which this was but a figure.

What ever God Sanctifies by his presence must not be defiled by the approach or touch of any unclean thing. When God appears to *Moses* in the *Burn* or *Joshuah* in the *Vale*, both must put off their shoes from their feet, because the ground was holy on which they stood. *Paradise* could bear our first Parents no longer, when they had lined away their Innocence. Nay the *Angels* fell from Heaven, when they fell from the Holiness in which they were created.

And Possession, (which you call *Eleven Points*) could not secure their stay. And

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thinkest thou with an unsanctified heart, which bears *Satans* Image to be admitted into that place, from which that very *Image* cast them out. 'Tis said some Vessels are so delicate and pure that they will hold no *Poyson*, but crush and break in pieces to be rid on't. Should one sinner get into Heaven with his unchanged, his invenomed Nature, Heaven would cleave under him as the Earth did under *Korah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, rather than not discharge it self of him. Yea when he saw his own loathsomness in that pure place, he would save and prevent their labour who would cast him out, and partly for shame to be so unlike the rest, and partly for the unagreeableness of the place to his expectations and desires, he would leap down headlong, rather than tarry there. As *Uzziah* when the *Leprosie* arose in his Forehead, the *Priests* thrust him out of the *Temple*, yea he himself hastened to go out, *2 Chron. xxvi. 20.* And the expression is remarkable concerning the *Angels* which kept not their first State, they left their own Habitation, *Jud. verse 6.* for though *Michael* and his *Angels* fought and cast them out, *Rev. xii. 7, 8, 9.* Yet they were soon weary of Heaven, and of their Holy Habitation, and ready enough

enough to leave it of their own accord, when they had made themselves so unlike to it.

And what ever they think, who look upon *Heaven* as a reserve, when they can stay no longer in this world, to be chosen rather than the place of Torment: and phansie it like a *Turkish Paradise*, a place of ease and sloath, to eat and drink, and gratifie their sensualities, from an absurd misunderstanding of some allusive and *Figurative* expressions; yet if an un sanctified man, with his heart full of his present *Antipathies* against the Holiness of that place, should step in thither, it would certainly be the most irksom and disagreeable place he ever came in, and more like a *Purgatory* than a *Paradise*, and never was he so uneasie, as he would be there, nor was ever creature so much out of its *Element*, as such a man would be. And how strange or surprizing soever this may seem, its easie to convince you of its Truth by Principles of Reason. For likeness is the cause of liking, and Satisfaction ariseth from the suitableness of the *Object* to the *Subject* that receives it. Many things have an intrinsick Excellency in themselves, and are very desirable to those, to whose capacities and dispositi-

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ons they are suited : which are not so at all to others. *Hony* is very sweet to an Healthful Pallate : but bitter to the Tongue which is dried and scorched with a *Feaver*. Meat and drink are very pleasant to an hungry Stomach, but their sight or smell will make him Sick who is troubled with a *nausea* or loathing : *Musick* and *Songs* greatly delight a chearful airy spirit, but to him that is of an *Heavvy* heart, are like the taking away a *Garment* in cold weather, *Prov. xxv. 20*. And to him that's tyr'd out for want of rest, one hours *Sleep* would be more welcome, than the best *Melody* of Voice or Instrument.

We are never well but when we are where we would be : and we would never be out of our own *Element*. The *Worm* in the Earth, the *Bird* in the Air, the *Fish* in the water ; not only live, but each in his *Place* doth grow, and sing and play. But change their *Element*, and presently they languish and dye.

Sin and this World are a sinners *Element*, and put him into *Heaven* whilst he continues such, and his Heart would dye within him as soon as he found where he was. The *Air* of that purer Region, that Holy *Climax* would be to him as *Heaven* is said.

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said to be to Spiders, Tants and Vipers. His Conversation must be in Heaven, whilst he lives, Phil. iii. 20. to whom Heaven would be Heaven indeed, that is, a place of Bliss and satisfaction when he dyes.

Secondly, The Company: And this makes an unsanctified person more unfit for Heaven, and would render his being there yet more uneasie to him.

Can two walk together except they be agreed? Amos iii. 3. And there is just such agreement betwixt a wicked unsanctified sinner, and all the Company in Heaven: as there is betwixt Light and Darkness, Christ and Belial, the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent. You may find what Company there is in Heaven by that short, yet full Muster-Rowl of that Heavenly Host, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. The sum of which is this, that in the City of the living God the Heavenly Jerusalem, there are God the Judge of all, Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, an innumerable company of Holy Angels, the General Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. To Name amongst all these, a more research be made then, was amongst all the treasures for an help for Adam.

The

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The return must be made us then, *non est inventus*. There was not found for Adam a meet help, *Gen. ii. 20*. So amongst all these will not be found a meet Companion for an *unfancified* sinner. Not God: for he hath been used to say to him, *Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that I should serve him? Job xxi. 20*. And God will take him at his word, they'l never come together, nor will he now be served or enjoyed by him.

Not Christ, for of him he said, *this man shall not reign over me, Luke xix. 14*. What therefore should he do in his Kingdom? Or how can he have Fellowship with him, who trampled his blood under his Feet? Not the Holy Spirit whom he always resisted, grieved, vexed, fretted, and did despight unto; whilst he was striving with him, to render him a meet *Habitatio* for God.

Not the Holy Angels, for he never caused their Joy in Heaven by his Repentance: and they can not be glad to see him there. Not the Spirits of just men made perfect: for the beginnings of that perfection in the first lineaments of Christ's Image on their hearts and lives: and the initial participation of the Divine Nature:

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Nature made them the *Objetts* of his scorn and hatred. Whom tho his Brethren by *Nature*, he loved just as *Cain* did *Abel*: and for the same reason, 1 *John* iii. 12. Or as *Ishmael* did *Isaac*, or *Eſau* *Jacob*, or as a *Wolfe* doth love a *Sheep*. The *Righteous* is abomination to the *Wicked*, *Prov.* xxix. 27. And what a kind of *Heaven* would it be for an unsanctified man to be shut up with such *Company* as he hates with the worst of *Antipathies*: and vilifies with the bitterest censures, and most despicable scorn?

Nor could the *Company* of *Heaven* like him better than he likes them. For *God* is not a *God* that hath pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him, *Pſal.* v. 4, 5. *Christ* saith to them depart from me, ye that work iniquity, *Matth.* vii. 23. The *Holy Spirit* will not entertain him, who would never open the door to him, knocke he never ſo earnestly and long, but all ways shut him out of his heart. 'Tis the *Offices* of the blessed *Angels* to gather out of the *Kingdom* all things that offend, and them that do iniquity: and to cast them into a furnace of fire, *Matth.* xiii. 41, 42. And they will do their Office impartially. As for the *Saints*, as they could give them no *Oyl* to help them in *Matth.* xxi. 9. So would

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would they give them no countenance, should they get in without it. *Miserables* them, *Jehoi. v. 14*. The souls under the Altar cryed against them whilst they lived, *Revel. vi. 9*. And shall judge them when they dye, *1 Cor. vi. 2*. The whole Herd makes head against a blown Deer. Those Loyal Subjects will not harbour such Traitors against their Lord and King. Then shall be the great *Excommunication*: and the Church of the first born will put from amongst them every wicked person, as *1 Cor. v. 13*. injoyns. Therefore O un sanctified sinner beehink thy self in time. To which of the Saints wilt thou turn, *Job v. 1*.

Thirdly, The Work of Heaven. which he hath neither skill to perform, nor time nor heart to learn, renders an un sanctified man as incapable of Heaven as either of the former. For the Work of Heaven is to serve the Lord incessantly. And his servants shall serve him, *Revel. xii. 10*. To do his Will so perfectly, that tis set as a pattern how to do it on Earth. Thy will be done on Earth as tis in Heaven, *Mat. vi. 10*. To love the Lord with perpetual mists, and ravishments of Soul: to Worship him thumbrs upon the Throne, and give him glory, throwing down their Crowns at his

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his feet, and saying thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power, to sound forth Eternal Hallelujahs, and not to cease either day or night, from crying Holy, Holy, Holy: to him which was, and is, and is to come, Rev. iv. To sing the Song of Moses, and the Lamb who redeemed them from the Earth, and made them to his Father, Kings and Priests to offer up the pure incense of Eternal Praises. And such as this being the incessant endless imployment of Heaven, I beseech you give me leave with freedom, to Appeal to your Consciences, who either never Pray nor Praise: or stubber over a few formal Devotions, for custom sake, and to stop the Mouth of Conscience with the greatest weariness, as the most irksome task and druggery of your lives, and are so ty'd at a Prayer or Sermon, that nothing tries your patience like it: or seems so tedious, and so much the more as the service is more spiritual and searching: what would you do in Heaven? what corner would you find to sleep in? How many weary'd and longing Eyes would you cast upon that Glass of Eternity, which will never be run out: How tedious would that everlasting Sabbath seem, when you so often ask of these below,

when

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when will they be gone. Amos viii. 5. I intreat you therefore be convinced of the indispensable necessity of *Sanctification* to make you fit to go to Heaven with Christ. For either God must change the Nature of Heaven, to fit it to thy *Phanſie*, which he will never do: or thy heart must be made like it, even Holy and Heavenly to savour and delight in the things of God, or else Heaven it self would be no Heaven to thee.

In a word: without *Justification* thou canst not go to Heaven as a state of happiness tho thou wouldst: and without *Sanctification* thou wouldst not go to Heaven as a state of Holiness tho thou mightst. See Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light.* Mark! 'Tis an Inheritance: thou must be made a Son to have a Title to Inherit: there's *Justification*. But 'tis an inheritance of the *Saints in light*, and thou must be made a Saint and Child of Light, to be meet to enter into the possession of it. There's *Sanctification*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? be not deceived neither Fornicators nor Idolaters, &c. shall inherit the Kingdom of God, and such were some*

some of you, how then came they to be capable? But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. Here you have them both expressly. St. Paul again tells you, Rom. viii. 30. Whom he justified, them he also glorified. In which place also we have both these, the first explicitly: you must be justified before you can be glorified, the second implicitly, for therefore glorified signifies perfectly sanctified. Grace is glory in the Bud and Blofom. Glory is Grace in the full blown Flower and ripe Fruit: Now as no ripe Fruit without a Blofom, no full blown Rose without a Bud; so no Glory without Grace preceeding. *From glory to glory.* 1 Cor. iii. ult. That is from Glory inchoate in Grace on Earth, to Glory consummate in Bliss in Heaven. As child-hood is before man-hood, and he that never was a child, shall never be a man: So he in whose heart Christ was never formed by the immortal seed. Who never was born of the Spirit. Who never as a new born Babe desired the sincere Milk of the Word to grow thereby, shall never arrive at the *Stature* of the fulness of Christ, shall never attain to that perfect Image of the Son of God, to which
all

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all his, are *Predestinated* to be Confor-
mable : shall never be a perfect man in
Christ, nor appear before him perfect in
Zion, to follow the Lamb upon that Holy
Mountain.

The Conceptions which the best men
have of Heaven, are very low, obscure
and imperfect, but certainly those which
ignorant and prophane men have of it, are
strangely absurd and brutish, on it were
impossible they should ever hope to get
thither, till their sins be both pardoned
and subdued; for 'tis next to a *contradiction*
to think they can reign with Christ, in
whose mortal *Bodies*, or immortal *Souls*
sin is allowed, and continues to reign. For
least of all in this sense, can *corrupted*
inherit immortal.

Thirdly, The two things, we last
insisted on, are the main to *constitute* us
Christians, and blessed is he that hath
attained them; to be *Justified* and *Sanctified*;
yet one thing is farther necessary,
if not to the *Essence*, yet to the
being of a Christian, to
render us compleatly and actually ready,
for Christs present coming.

They that had their Lamps lighted, and
Oyl provided in their Vessels, yet *slumbered*
and slept, and tho their Lamps were

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not gone out, they burnt dim, and wanted new trimming. The brightest Coals will vail themselves with Ashes, if they be not blown off. And the clearest waters will contract a slime, and muddy Sediment, by long standing; and so will our Graces, decline, wax Faint, and languish, if they be not exerted, stirred up, and exercised: which makes it most needful, to be daily acting that Faith afresh upon the promises, by which we are justified, and actuating that Grace anew, by which we are Sanctified.

There are many expressions in Scripture whereby this duty is enjoined, as trimming our Lamps, Match. xxv. 40. Having our Lamps girded, and our Lights burning, Luke xii. 35. stirring up the gift of God, 2 Tim. i. 6. which in the Greek is an elegant Metaphor, signifying the blowing off the Ashes. Growing, with diligence, in our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. Proving our own selves, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Growing in Grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Going on to perfection, 1 Pet. ii. 12. Reaching forth to those things which are before, pressing towards the mark for the prize, Phil. iiii. 14. Being Righteous still, and Holy still, Rev. xxi. 27. that is, let him take care to be more and more so, by holding fast what we have,

Rev.

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Rev. iii. 3, 11. By keeping our selves in the Love of God, Jud. 21. Looking for and hastning to the coming of the day of God, 2 Pet. iii. 12. With many more, but the most frequent and most significant is *Watching*. Watch therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour when your Lord doth come, Mat. xxiv. 42. xxv. 13. Mark xiii. 35. and 37. What I say unto you I say unto all Watch. Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit you like men, be strong, 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

Now this charge given us in the Text, to be ready, as it, in the first place, requires our speedy care to get our sins pardoned, and our peace made with God, and our hearts changed, and our Natures renewed to the Image of God, so it farther puts us upon a dayly strengthening our Faith, and renewing our Repentance, labouring after assurance, standing upon our constant guard, and endeavouring to be always in such a posture, as we would be willing, nay glad, to be found in, when ever Christ shall come. To Watch against sloath, security, worldly cares, relapses into sin, or what ever may overcharge our hearts, and render us liable to surprise, or to be overtaken with that day as thieves, read Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. To rise speedily from our falls into sin, by present

present Repentance. To be watchful against all temptations to sin, and occasions of backsliding or declining.

For admitting, that on Gods part, (whose gifts and calling are without Repentance, Rom. xi. 29. and who loves unchangeably, and to the end, them whom he takes for his own, Joh. xiii. 1.) Those who are truly Justified and Sanctified, cannot fall totally and finally, from that estate: because God upholds them with his hand: and none can take them out of his hand, because he is stronger than all, Joh. x. 28, 29. and the Righteous are an everlasting Foundation, Prov. x. 25. because the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal the Lord knoweth who are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. and these two, *Deus Providet*, and *Christus Oravit*, Gods Providential care over them, and Christs constant intercession for them: will preserve them to, and at the last. Yet were it as possible on Gods part, as 'tis on theirs: It would be very sad for *David* and *Bathsheba*, to have dyed like *Zimri* and *Cozbi*, as they sinned like them; and for *St. Peter* to have breathed out his soul, in that breath, which was polluted with denying and forswearing of his Master; and for any man to dye without, at least a General Repen-

Repentance for every sin; and Particular Repentance for every gross and known sin, and therefore we must be upon our constant *Watch and Guard*.

Especially considering this *Watchfulness* is appointed as a means to preserve us from falling. (*Watch and Pray lest ye fall into temptation. Mark xiv. 38.*) By him who designs the means, as well as the end. And hath no where secured the end to them, who *disobey* and *tempt* him, by neglecting of the means, and for want of *Watching*. Admitting again they cannot break their *Necks*, (as the usual comparison is) wholly lose their *Spiritual life*; yet may they break their *Legs* and their *Arms*, and all their other *Limbs*, and go maimed and halting to their *Graves*. And may incur many dreadful evils to themselves, besides the dishonour they bring to God, reproach to the *Gospel* and scandal and offence they give to others; for they may by grieving the Spirit provoke him to suspend his influence: may wound their own *Conscience*: weaken their *Graces*, lose their *Comforts*: fall under *desertion*: pull down *Temporal vengeance* on themselves: be brought into *bondage* by the *fear of death*: lessen their reward in the Kingdom of Heaven, tho they should not wholly

wholly be shut out: you may make it
justly questionable, to themselves and o-
thers: whether they were ever *Justified*
and *Sanctified*, indeed, or had any more
than a name to live. All which do so in-
finitely out weigh the short, the paucity,
the filthy pleasures of sin, that their sloath,
and neglect of *Watching* may gratifie
them with: that I hope they may abund-
antly convince you of the necessity of
adding this last care, to what went be-
fore, to be presently ready for Christ, and
to keep your selves so, by *Watching* and
standing always on your guards, till he
shall come and give you the blessing pro-
mised to those he finds so doing, Matth.
xxiv. 46.

I shall now proceed to an useful im-
provement of this weighty truth, that
it is the indispensable duty, and high-
est wisdom of every man, to be present-
ly ready for Christs coming, and I shall en-
deavour it in four Uses.

1. Instruction.

2. Reprehension.

3. Examination.

4. Exhortation.

Altho I shall slide over the three first,
little more than naming the particulars,
the last being that which I chiefly de-
sign.

First,

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First, It will be very useful to *Instruct*, and direct you, what is to be done on your parts that you may become thus fit and ready for *Christ's coming*; or to attain those things, in which this *readiness* hath been declared to consist.

I take it for granted, that some thing is, yea very much is, incumbent on us, to be done on our parts: and that wretched *Opinion*, that we may neglect duty to Gods *Revealed will*; upon pretence of devolving all upon his *Secret Decrees*, is fitter to be exploded and abhorred amongst Christians, than confuted. The *Text* supposeth it when it bids ye be ready. And another *Text* expresseth it, which tells you: *The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*, Rev. xix. 7. And both the *Jaylers* question, *Sirs what must I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. And the answer to it imply so much. And that common saying of St. *Austin* hath obtained Universal consent, That he who made thee without thy self, will not save thee without thy self. It being therefore taken for granted, that we can and must do somewhat: let us now enquire, and so direct you what it is.

First,

First, Be thoroughly convinced of thy own *unreadiness*: Sence of want is the first, the most Natural and most effectual motive, to seek supply. *Jacob* would never have sent his Sons, much less his *Benjamin*, into *Egypt* to buy Food, if the *Famine* had not pincht him, and his Household in the Land of *Canaan*. *The full soul loatheth an Hony Comb, but to the hungry soul even bitter things are sweet.* They who are whole care not for the *Physitian*, but the sick will both send for him, and Fee him willingly. *Christ* calls those who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, *Curse* of the *Law*, sence of Gods wrath, and 'tis well if these will come, there is most hope of them, but for others, he may stretch out his hand all the day long, and they regard it not. There was enough said before to convince thee of thy *unreadiness*, if thou beest an *Unsanctified* man, this is only added to persuade thee to consider it, and to yield to conviction of thy sin and misery.

Secondly, Be persuaded of the infinite concernment of this matter: the water will rise no higher than the *Spring Head*: and the motion will answer the weight which causeth it, a small weight produceth but slow motion, but a great and
D heavy

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heavy one, such as is quick and violent. They that have *slight* thoughts of the concerns of another world, 'tis no wonder they are so little concerned about them: But they that consider well what is the Consequence of not being *ready* when *Christ comes*, what it is to have all the doors of Grace and Mercy, Hope and Glory shut against them, what it is to lose an *Immortal Soul*, which the gain of an whole world could not compensate. What it is to be driven from God and Christ, and the Regions of Bliss, with a *depart ye Cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*: to be shut up in that Dungeon of utter darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, under the gnawings of the *Worm*, which shall never dye, and in midst of a *fire* that shall never be *quenched*: in a word, they that wisely lay to heart this Truth, that the injoyment or loss of infinite and everlasting happiness; and the suffering or escaping endless and unconceivable torments, infallibly depends upon being, or not being *ready* for Christ, when he comes by Death or Judgment, will have other thoughts of these things, and will be awakened by them to make *ready* in good earnest.

earnest. Which I heartily wish we all may.

Thirdly, Get clear and distinct knowledg of the main Grounds of Religion. Knowledg is a loading Grace, *the new man is renewed in knowledg*, Col. iii. 10. And without it the *heart* cannot be good, tho it be too often without a good heart. But of all *Knowledg*, get as full and clear a *Knowledg* as you can, of the Covenant of Grace: by which alone the enmity is removed, and reconciliation is made, between an offended God, and lost mankind. And herein especially study to know the *Mediator* of this *Covenant*, as to his Person, Natures and Offices, and the Efficacy of his Death, Resurrection and Intercession: with the terms upon which he will receive thee as one of his redeemed ones: and what returns he expects from thee. What be those *sure Mercies of David* that *Covenant* conveighs, and what Obligations they are brought under, who are received into it, the *Knowledg* of these things is so useful, so necessary, so excellent, comprehending the true knowledg of Salvation: 'tis hard to desist from farther inlarging upon it, or pressing of it. An Interest in this *Covenant*, being the only means left us,

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for our Eternal safety and welfare.

Fourthly, Frequently reflect upon thy *Baptismal Covenant*. I know no one thing in all the world, more hopefully likely to restore the life of solid Christianity to the world, which is so miserably decayed and dead in it, than this would be.

For, first, It would mightily *restrain* sin, the bane of *Christianity*: to remember how solemnly we have renounced all the temptations and inducements to it: and no less provoke us to Faith and Obedience, the two great Pillars upon which *Christianity* is built: to think what Vows of God are upon us, and make us say with *David*. *I have sworn, and I will perform it that I will keep all thy Righteous Judgments*, Psal. cxix. 106.

Secondly, It would put warmth, and Holy fire, into all our *Devotions*, which are mostly so formal cold and dead. To consider what mutual engagements have past betwixt us, and that God to whom, that *Mediator* through whom, and that blessed Spirit, by whose assistance we perform them. They being all, by true interpretation, farther inforcements of those engagements, as were easie to shew in all the particulars of Prayer, Hearing

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the Word, and Receiving the Holy Supper.

Thirdly, It would heal our Divisions, and close up our Breaches, and restore that blessed Spirit of Love and Peace. The *Bond* of Perfection and *Badg* of Christs Disciples, and help us to keep and hold the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, as you may see from the *Apostles* arguing, *Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.* To call to mind, that we are all *Baptised* into one Body, joyned to one Head, received into the Family of one Father, obliged by the same Laws, made Candidates and Expectants of the same *Jerusalem* above, which is the Mother of us all.

And what would have so *beneficial* an influence upon the life of *Christianity*, cannot fail to *prepare* us for the *coming of Christ*. I therefore again inforce my importunate requests to you: that you would often and dayly meditate upon your *Baptismal Engagements* to the great God.

Fifthly, Apply thy self *sincerely and seriously*, to the use of all Gods means: with an earnest expectation and design, to receive from them, what God hath appointed them to convey to those who use them aright. Men for the most part

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use them *customarily*, and for *fashion sake*, expecting little from them, and receive as little as they expect. They proving dry Breasts and empty Channels. But if thou wouldest use them as thou shouldest, thou wouldest find it *good to draw nigh to God*, and that he never bid the house of Jacob *seek his face in vain*. 'Tis the Nature of means, to come in the middle, between what a man can do, and what he can not do, to help him by what he can do, to attain to what he can not do. In order to be *ready for Christ*, some thing a man can do, some thing he can not do. He can *Read, Hear, Pray, Consider*, stir his Natural affections, *Love, Fear, Hope, Desire*, by weighing what he knows. Some things, as yet, he can not do. *Repent, turn to God, believe Savingly*, for these are the *gifts and work of God*. Now God hath set the *first* in the way to the *second*, as it were in the middle betwixt what he can do, and what he can not, that by doing what he can at present: he may gradually come to ability to do, what he cannot yet do, and by degrees may ascend thither; whether he could not reach (*per Saltum*) at once: I will make this plain by an easie *comparison*. A man cannot at one stride
step

step up into the Room above him, ten foot higher than the floor he stands on: but if there be a *Pair of Stairs*, he can set his Foot first on the lowest, than on the second, third, and by degrees ascend a second, third, fourth Story, tho ten or twenty Foot above the place from whence he first began. Just thus, there is a *Jacobs Ladder* of many Rounds, set up between *Heaven* and *Earth*. We cannot step at once from *Nature* to *Grace*, from *Earth* to *Heaven*; but we may begin at the foot of this *Ladder*, and climb from the first Round to the second, and then the third, and so to the top, and gradually by the help of this *Ladder*, and the hand of the Spirit leading us up, we come to that, which without this we could not reach by the means of *Grace*, we attain *Grace*: and by *Grace*, as a means we attain *Glory*. I therefore again press you to *Read, Hear, Pray, Meditate* with honest industry, and an humble expectation of Gods blessing upon his own Institutions, and thy labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Sixthly, Allow your selves due time and leisure for these things. Be good Husbands of time; no thrift is more commendable. Eternity depends upon it. And as I would specially commend

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commend unto you the strict *Sanctifying* the *Lords day* : a thing much out of use, which is one of the most visible Causes, why the power of Godliness, withers and dwindles so much away. (For 'tis easily observable that *Religion* thrives and prospers proportionably to the *improvement* of this day : and flourisheth, or is trodden down, according as this Fence is kept up, or neglected.) So let me earnestly commend to you, the setting apart some Portion of time every day, for God and your souls. That as God hath the Tribute of a *Day-Sabbath* out of the Week : He may have as it were an *Hour-Sabbath* out of every Day. As there was a continual Morning and Evening *Sacrifice* daily under the Law : so there should be at least, Morning and Evening time allowed for Spiritual Sacrifice under the Gospel.

And here I cannot, I dare not, forbear to caution you of this great City ; against the over lavish spending of whole Evenings in *Publick Houses*, and at your *Clubbs*. (Tho 'tis easy to foresee it may offend, both those, whose guilt, and whose interest it toucheth, for both these are teachy things) not that I am so rigid as to censure moderate *Diversions*, and *Friendly Conversation*. But I fear, yea I greatly

greatly fear, there is a fault, yea a great fault in this matter. If after your Shops, your Counting-House, and Business, and the Change have taken all the day, the Coffee-House, the Tavern, and the Clubb, shall take up all your Evening. What's left for God, for Souls, and for Eternity? And thou returnest home so late, that thy Family is in Bed, or half asleep, and thy head full of Stories and News, at least, if not of something worse: How slenderly, cursorily, and uncomposedly is God like to be served, in Family and Closet, if not shut out of both? And what if Christ should come and find you doing thus? Could you expect his *Euge bone serve?* well done good and faithful servant, or no: rather his frown, with why hast thou served me thus?

Seventhly, If thou wouldest be ready for Christ; get thy heart furnish'd and prepared, as that Room was where he eat his last Passover, Mark xiv. 15. Cast out all thy Lusts, and cast off every weight; but above all keep thy self from thine own iniquity, foster no bosome sin, enter into league with none. Tho'twill be hard enough to get rid of others, yet thoult be easilier quit of twenty others than of such an one.

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A *darling sin*, a *bosom sin*, a *peccatum in deliciis*, is of all sins most offensive to God, most dangerous to our selves. One *Dalilah* was too strong for *Sampson* himself; and he could not stand before her, before whom a thousand men fell at one time: but she cost him his *Eyes* and his *Life*. Every sin is a *snare*, and a *cord* to intangle men; but none so much as his *Own sin*. His *Own iniquities*, (there's the *Emphasis*) his *Own* shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the *Cords* of *His* sins, *Prov. v. 22*. Whether it be the sin of thy *Natural Constitution*, or thy *Calling* and *Profession* of life: or the *time* and *place* thou livest in; or that long usage and *custom* hath indeared to thee. (For from these four quarters, this blasting wind, usually blows upon men) and made as a *right Hand*, or a *right Eye*: or as the spots to a *Leopard*, or skin to an *Ethiopian*. This sin, what ever it be, is the *plague* of thy heart, the most *Mortal Disease* of thy *Soul*, and thou must set thy self with all thy might, both to find it out, and cast it out, and mortifie it. 'Twas *David's* Argument for his uprightness, that he kept himself from his own iniquity, *Psal. xviii. 23*. *I was also upright before him, and I kept my self from mine iniquity.*

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iniquity. And so must thou if ever thou expect acceptance with God.

'Tis bad to be forced, or ravished, by Sin and Satan: 'tis worse to yield consent to one act of defilement, or Spiritual Uncleanneſs: but 'tis worst of all to be married to them, and this thou art by fostering a Bosome darling ſin. This yields the constant uſe of Soul and Body to his impure embraces. This keeps Poſſeſſion for him, and opens the Door as often as he knocks, and he enters in and dwells there. Davids luſt to Bathſhebah, tho very foul, is called a Way-faring man and a Traveller, 2 Sam. xii. 4. But where a darling ſin is harboured, there Satan is at Home in his own Houſe. This makes thy condition almoſt deſperate, and nothing, but a ſpeedy Divorce can prevent its being altogether ſo.

Eighthly, Diſentagle and unchain thy heart from the inordinate love and cares of the things of this world. Account thy ſelf a Stranger and a Pilgrim here. Know that this is not thy reſt, thou haſt here no continuing place. But eſpecially take Gods Counſel to Hezekiah, Iſa. xxxviii. 1. Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, and not live. Prevent in time of Health, the diſtractions the unſetledneſs of thy worldly

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worldly Affairs may and will give thee in the *last Stage* of thy life: leave nothing which may hinder thy following Christ readily, without once looking back, when he is about to lead thee out of this world. Remember *Lots Wife*. Luke xviii. 32. *Readiness* to go into another world, Supposes *Readiness* to go out of this.

Lastly, Call in the assistance and help of others. 'Tis the Character of a wise-man, that he is ζητινός inquisitive. When *John Baptist* came Preaching Repentance, and shewing them their danger, that the *Ax* was laid to the root of the tree: And that every tree that brought not forth good fruit should be hewed down and cast into the fire, Luke iii. 9. They all fall to asking, verse 10. The people asked of him, what shall we do then, verse 10. The *Publicans*, Master what shall we do? ver. 12. And the *Souldiers* likewise demanded of him saying, What shall we do? verse 14. Also Christs Hearers, John vi. 28. said unto him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? And the afrighted *Jayler* cryed out, Sirs what must I do to be saved, Act. xvi. 30. But where's the man that moves such questions now adays? Or asks the way to Zion? If you feel the least
grudging

grudging of a Distemper in your Bodies, the *Physician* is sent for presently. Or fear a flaw in your Estates, you run to the *Lawyer*: but every man thinks himself *Physician* skilful enough for his Soules Distempers, and *Lawyer* good enough for his Title to Heaven. And tho *The Priests* should preserve knowledge, and the people should enquire the Law at his mouth, because he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, *Mal. ii. 7.* Yet tho he be *A Messenger* one of a thousand, an Interpreter to shew to man his uprightness, *Job xxxiii. 23.* To declare to him whether his Spiritual condition be good and safe, and such as makes him ready for Christ, yet may he sit in his study till he dye before any come to interrupt him with such business.

It's true indeed, it may be you will send for him when you are Sick, I blame not this, better then, than not at all; provided it be not too late, as too oft it is. When the *Physician* leaves you and gives you over as hopeless: and you are drawing on, and have scarce any use of Sence or Reason left. As the *Foolish Virgins* beg for Oyl, when sickness and the approaching pangs of death, gave them that smart Alarm. Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. And then you would

be

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be getting, when you should be using it, what your whole life was lent you for. And then you would be taught in one quarter of an hour, (and when the indispositions both of Body and Mind, have made you past learning, or at least very *unfit* to learn) what is a Lesson hard enough for many years, even the calmest and least disturbed of them: and when thou didst injoy a sound Mind in a sound Body.

I beseech you friends resolve me; nay rather resolve your selves; if it be good to consult your *Spiritual Guides* then, is it not better to do it sooner? whilst you are capable to take their Counsel, and have time to follow it? and if they may do you good then, may they not do you more good in a *fitter season*? Why then will you chuse the less before the more, and the worse before the better? I therefore with repeated importunity again intreat you call in all the help you can, both from experienced humble Christians, who make it their business in good earnest, to be ready for Christ themselves. And also from your faithful Pastors, *Who watch for your souls*. Solomon tells us twice, that in the multitude of Counsellors there is safety, Prov. xi. 14. xxiv. 6. and hath a *va soli*,

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woe to him that is alone, Eccl. iv. 10. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, Prov. xxviii. 26. And he that trusteth to it is little better. For besides its deceitfulness, and our Natural Partiality to our selves. Our ignorance and inadvertency needs much help, from the prudence and fidelity of others. Choose therefore some serious *Soul-friend*, to whom thou mayest, with modesty and freedom, lay open thy Spiritual state. And as I told you before, that nothing is worse than a *Bosome-sin*. So nothing is better than such a *Bosome-friend*, to help thee into *Abrahams Bosome*, and the Arms of *Christ*. And this for the first Use of Direction, which I have enlarged much beyond my first intentions, and therefore will be very brief in the two that follow next.

Second Use, Reprehension, I shall name three sorts only to be reprov'd for sinning against the Truth we are handling. First, Those profane ungodly sinners, who are so far from endeavouring to be ready against *Christs coming*, that they rather live without any sence of *Death* and *Judgment*, and *Christs coming* at all: saying, at least in their hearts, and in their lives, with those *Scoffers* walking after their own lusts, 2 Pet. iii. 4. *Where is the promise*

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promise of his coming? As if they had made *A Covenant with death, and were at an agreement with hell*, As the Prophet describes them, *Isay.xxviii. 15.* Who rather work out their own *damnation with security, presumption, and provocation*: than their *Salvation with fear and trembling*. But such *monsters* of men, under the disguise and shape of Christians, are fitter to be abhorred of all, than reprov'd of any. These *Leviathans* esteeming our Scripture Artillery, as he in *Job lxi. 27. 28.* *Doth Iron, Brass, and sling-stones, as stubble, straw or rotten wood.* Tho God can make these feeble weapons, mighty in his time to pull down the strongest holds of *Satan*.

Secondly, Those who tho they believe these things in general, and approve them, and commend others for making ready for Christ: yet neglect the practice and performance of them: resting in some common hopes, some faint desires, some outward observances, some *ineffectual* half endeavours; and rather wish they were ready for Christ, than take care to be so: and will rather put it to the venture, than be at the pains of any Spiritual Industry to be ready in good earnest, which is the very case of multitudes of common Christians.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, Those, who tho they are convinc'd they ought, and also resolve they will get ready, and stick at nothing which may make them so; yet put off and delay from day to day, and year to year. *Semper victuri*, as Seneca calls them, all way about to do it, but never do it; *always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.* Stick in the birth and therefore are unwise, Hof. xiii. 13. And indeed nothing makes a man a greater fool, or more proves him to be such, than this, to know what should be done, and to resolve to do it, and yet never set about it. And therefore God brands them with this reproachful Character of folly which men are so impatient of. He that was so very busie in taking care for many years, fears presently *Thou fool this night.* And to the Foolish Virgins who had Lamps and Vessels to hold Oyl, yet filled them not. And indeed what folly greater, than for men to go to Hell with their Eyes open? To know their danger, and yet to play and dally with it till it surprize and snap them, and to stand where the Bullets fly thickest: and yet neither get an Armor, nor hasten their escape, to be out of reach of Gun-shot? What will, if this will not, prove men to be indeed foolishly?

Third-

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Third Use, *Examination*; Expect not from me here, a large enumeration of the signs of Grace: I design not that. But a brief tryal of thy *readiness* for *Christ*. Try thy self therefore, as to that whether you be *ready* as the Text requires. There is no *knowledg* more necessary, or more worthy of a *wise mans* pains; than the knowledg of himself, and his Estate towards God. It hath obtained the Authority of a *Celestial Aixome*, even amongst *Heathens*. *Know thy self.* (*ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατέβη*) And questionless it may be obtained, if we believe either *St. Peter* or *St. Paul*, for the first bids us *give diligence to make our calling and election sure*; *2 Pet. i. 10.* Therefore surely he thought it feasible. The second enjoyns us thus, *Examine your selves whether you be in the Faith: prove your own selves: know you not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except you be Reprobates?* *2 Cor. xiii. 5.* Doubtless therefore he judged we might without special *Revelation*, even by serious self-examination, know this of our selves.

First, Therefore try it, by the *verdict* of thy own *Conscience*, ask it soberly, and let it answer freely, and it will speak and not lye. Great is the force of *Conscience* on
either

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either side, both to acquit and to condemn, Rom. ii. 15. *Their Conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another.* And if the blind Consciences of the darkned Gentiles, had this power, how much more the Consciences of Christians, enlightned by the Gospel, and assisted, at least by the common influences of the Holy Spirit.

Bring in thy *Bill* therefore, to this *Grand Inquest*: before these, *mille testes*, thousand Witnessess. 'Twill not write *Ignoramus* on it. 'Tis *Magni Judicii prejudicium*, a *Petty Sessions* to the great *Assize*, a previous Judgment to the last and most awful one. Neither bribe it, nor stop its mouth, and it will speak as he would have it, whose *Deputy* it is. The spirit of a man is the *Candle of the Lord*, searching all the inward parts of the belly, Prov. xx. 27. That which is most hid and secret, this light will discover, find out, and manifest. The things of a man, the spirit of a man, which is in him, knows: tho none else can, 1 Cor. ii. 11. And therefore the *Testimony* of our Conscience yields great *rejoycing*: when it witnessess our *Simplicity* and *Godly Sincerity*. 2 Cor. i. 12. And St. John tells us, If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence

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confidence towards God, 1 Eph. iii. 21. Weigh not thy self therefore in the false ballance of other mens Opinions. Nec te quasi-veris extra, as Persius could advise. But get into thy Closet, retire, be still, Commune with thine own heart, Psal. iv. 4. and let it speak freely, 'twill answer like an Oracle of God.

Interrogate thy heart in this, or such like manner: Have I with desire desired? Have I with a thirsty Appetite panted after this *readiness* for Christ? Have I with constant and restless diligence endeavoured to attain it? Have I arrived, at least, at some settled hope, that if Christ should now come, I should be found of him in *peace*?

Secondly, By the scope and tendency of thy life, by the Fruits thou bearest: *Examine* whether thou art a Tree, which if now cut down, must be Fuel for the fire which shall burn for ever; or building Timber, for the House not made with hands, Eternal in the Heavens! If others may know us, and we may know them, by the *Fruits* which either bear: why may we not much rather know our selves by them? the frame of our hearts, and the scope of our lives, are great *indications*, whither we are going. If our hearts be

be in Heaven, and our Conversation be in Heaven, our soul, shall be received there. If thou fix thy *choice*, thy delight and love, on right-hand blessings; thou shalt stand at Christs Right hand, at the *last day*. If thou walk in the *straight* and *narrow* way, it will lead thee to, and into, the *straight gate*, which gives entrance into Life. But the *broad* way of Hell, will never lead any man to Heaven.

Thirdly, By thy willingness to dye: thy *looking* for, and *hastning* to the *day* of God: and *loving* the *appearance* of *Jesus Christ*. Not but that Nature may recoil and shrink: and the flesh may draw back, and be loath to part: for even where the *Spirit* is *willing* the *Flesh* is *weak*: but upon *sedate recollection*, the willingness of the Spirit will fortifie the weakness of the Flesh; and cry out Go forth my Soul, for he is a gracious Lord, thou art going now to meet.

Fourth Use, Exhortation. I hasten to that in which I designed the chief improvement of this truth; that is, to exhort and quicken you, to the speediest diligence and care, to get *ready* for Christs *coming*. And tho I desire to work both upon your Consciences and your Affections;

ns; to set before you your Obedience and your Interest: to urge you in point of duty, and in point of wisdom, and to press you to avoid both the sin and danger, *procrastination* will involve you in: yet I shall not curiously distinguish the motives, to rank each Series by themselves. But as God hath *twisted* his *glory* and our *happiness* so close together, in great wisdom and mercy, that we cannot promote the one, but we advance the other: nor neglect the one, but we destroy and lose the other. So is it in our *sin* and *danger*: they are prevented, or incur'd together: and therefore I may well wreath into one *chain*, the motives which concern either of them, to draw you out of your *delay*: and *twist* them into one *cord*, wherewith to quicken and accelerate your motion.

And not to heap up here, the many Scriptures, which speak so home and plainly to this matter: but to leave them to fall in, to inforce each motive, to which they more properly belong; I shall begin with that which stands so near the *Text*, that it is urged in the same *verse*, as a reason to inforce the duty. Be ye therefore *ready*, for, or *because*, *The Son of man cometh, at an hour, when ye think not.*

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The first Motive is taken from the uncertainty of the time of our *death*, and our Lords coming. And the Inference is so obvious, that the Light of Nature, and common Reason hath clearly discovered it, and excellently inforced it. Because thou knowest not, saith *Seneca*, where death will expect thee, expect thou it in every place: and because thou knows not when it will meet thee, do thou look for it at every time. And he hath so many apposite passages, in one *Epistle*, written upon the occasion of the sudden death of *Cornelius Senecio*, 'twere easie to fill a *Page* with what might be pertinently extracted thence, and looks more like a *Christian Homily*, than the writing of an *Heathen Moralist*. But they that can, and will consult the whole, may find it, *Epist.* 101. in his works. For we need not go down to *Askelon* to whet our stiles, to make them pungent on this subject. We may Feather these Arrows from the Wing of the Holy Dove. No Nail is fastned more surely, or driven to the head with more reiterated stroaks, by the hand of the Spirit. than this; to quicken us to be presently, to be always ready: to watch, to have our Loins girded, our Shoes on our Feet, our Staves

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in our Hands, our Lights burning, because we know not the time, neither the hour of the day, nor the Watch in the night, wherein our Lord will come. And he that may come in any one, should be prepared for in every one. It seems to be the very design and reason, for which God hath hidden from us the knowledg of *Death and Judgment*: to prevent security and putting off our preparing for it, *1 Thess. v. 2. Your selves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober, verse 6. So 2 Pet. iii. 10. The day of God will come as a thief in the night. See the inference, verse 11. 12. Therefore what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? looking for, and hastning to the coming of the day of God. That is, hastning to be fit for it, So in Rev. iii. 3. If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. I'll content my self with naming but one place more, Mark xiii. 32, 33, 36. Of that day and that hour knoweth no man. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. Watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at*
Even

Even or at Midnight, or at the Cock crowing, or in the morning) lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all, Watch. Many go to bed well, and sleep their long sleep, awake not till in another world. Many go abroad well but their journey leads them to their long home, and they return not to the place from whence they went. What is another mans case may be thine, therefore be thou ready.

Secondly, All delay is dangerous. If thy House be on fire a timely diligence may quench it, but a short neglect may leave thee both poor and harbourless. A breach in a Sea wall, if left but open to the next Tide, may prove irreparable, and drown a Country. If an invading Enemy have time to intrench, 'twill be harder if not past thy skill, to drive him out. A green Wound may be easily Healed, but if thou let it alone till it Rancle, Fester, and Gangreen; it may cost thee thy life. If a Suit be Commenced against thee, it is dangerous to let it run till it come to Execution, or an Outlary: these and an hundred such allusions might be given, to shew the case 'twixt God and us. His wrath is kindled, *kiss the Son* lest it break out into a

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consuming fire. Sin and Satan have invaded thy soul, let them not intrench and fortifie, but drive them out quickly. Thou hast wounded thy Conscience, get quickly some *Balm of Gilead*, some Balm of Christs Blood before it Fester, Gangreen, and be incurable.

God hath a Controversie with thee, and is entring his Action. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into prison, verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the last farthing,* Matth. v. 25, 26. And of how much greater importance the matter is, so much more dangerous is it to delay. The folly is less to run an hazard where the loss is small, and easiely repairable: but 'tis madness to defer where Estate, and Liberty, and Life, and All's at stake, and this case is more than such: for thy Soul, and Heaven, and God are lost for ever, if thou be surprized unready.

Thirdly, This *delay* is sinful, as well as dangerous; all Commands, relating to it, are in present force. The Imperative Mood hath no Future Tense. They

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are not like some human Laws, whose Obligation Commenceth not, till some months after they were Enacted, these bind *semper*, and *ad semper*, all ways, and at all times: for 'tis never lawful to be *unready* for Christ. To be Unjustified, Unsanctified, Unmindful of his coming, in an estate of enmity against him, or alienation from him.

Fourthly, There are farther many explicate clear and plain Commands, injoyning this present and speedy performance. *When thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it: for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, Eccl. v. 4, 5, 6.* Where note, that to defer paying, is not to pay. Now let us apply this to our great *Baptismal Vow*, in keeping which, I shewed, our *readiness* for Christ consists. And here's an express Command not to defer our being ready for him. *Ecclesiast. xviii. 22. Defer not until death to be justified, is the good counsel of the Son of Syrack, and very consonant to the Commands of God.*

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him. Sin hath

made God thy *enemy*, this life is the way in which thou art passing on to Death and Judgment, as the end of it. Therefore in thy life before death; and because thou hast no assurance of thy life, beyond the present time, (for who knows what a day may bring forth) therefore presently agree and make thy peace with him. And as *Ananias* said to *Saul*, Acts xxii. 16. *Arise why tarryest thou? be baptized, improve thy Baptism, wash away thy sins; and call upon the name of the Lord. And what thou doest do quickly, lest God take thy delaying, for a denying to obey his will.*

Fifthly, 'Tis a sin against the Light of Nature, which teaches all to hasten *speedily*, into some place of safe-guard when they are in danger. Not only men by use of common Reason, but the inferior Creatures yield *Obedience* to this Law by Natural Instinct: how will they run, how will they fly to shelter when what would hurt them, either pursues, or hovers over them. Shall the *Cony* shoot into its *Burrow* in the *Rock*, as soon as ere it spies a *Dog*? And shall not that *Bandog* of Hell, (from which *David* Prays to be delivered, *my darling from the dog,*) Which hunts for our souls, scare us to the *Rock*

of

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of Ages, and the holes of that Rock, the Wounds of Christ? Shall the silly Chicken, by the shadow of the Kite, be driven to its damme: and shall not we betake ourselves to him, who offers to gather us as an Hen gathers her Chickens under her wings: when that great Vulture, that preys on men, is ready to gripe us, with his fiery Talons? Oh how has sin, not only unman'd us, but degraded us, below the basest of the Creatures: and erased and Cancelled, the most legible of all the Laws of Nature, the Law of self-preservation?

Sixthly, 'Tis an error against common Prudence, and the Principle thou accest by in least concerns. There thy Rule is, better too soon, than too late. If for the Fair or Market, if for a Journey, or to see a Show or Play, How early wilt thou rise? How timely wilt thou go to get a place? And stay two hours for them, rather than venture to come one minute too late, and hazard to lose that which will not stay for thee: yea to meet thy Companions in sin, and to gratifie thy Lusts? How afraid art thou to come too late. And yet for God and thy Soul, thou thinkest all's in good time, tho thou set out never so late. What is, if this be

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not, to be wise to do evil, but to have no knowledge to do good? And surely this will be no small aggravation of mens faults, when it appears they wanted *Prudential Rules* of Conduct in nothing, but the things of God; which argues their despising of them, as if not worthy to imploy their wits, or thoughts about. That man in the Gospel who could contrive so prudently, to fit his *Barns* to his *Crop*, and both to his *Belly*, and all to his *Lusts*, *Take thy ease, eat drink and be merry*: How doth God reproach him, and disappoint him with a vengeance? For not being at least, as wise for Heaven, as for Earth, *Thou fool this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?* For so is every one, who lays up treasure to himself, and is not rich towards God, Luke xii. 20, 21.

Seventhly, 'Tis a sin against the *Examples* of all wise and good men. All the *Wise Virgins* were ready for the *Bridegrooms* coming. 'Tis the *Character* of a wise man, to take time by the fore-lock. *Soloman*, saith, *A wise mans Eyes are in his head*, Eccl. ii. 14. To see before him. And God expressly, *Dent. xxxii. 29.* *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end, to do*

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do this then is to be wise. So, *Be wise O ye Kings, what proves them so? To serve the Lord with fear, to kiss the son lest he be angry and they perish from the way, Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12.* And *David*, that man after Gods own heart, (and surely nothing is more according to the heart of God) gives this testimony of himself. *I made hast, and prolonged not the time to keep thy Commandments, Psal. cxix. 60.* And *Abraham*, when God made a Covenant with him, deferred not to Seal it, with the painful Seal of Circumcision, the self same day, as is Emphatically noted, *Gen. xvii. 23.* And when he was tempted to offer up *Isaac*: *He rose up early in the morning to go about that hard work, Gen. xxii. 3.* And the Disciples when Christ called them, immediately left the Ship and their Father, and followed him, *Matth. iv. 22.* And when God called the *Jayler*, *Act. xvi. The same hour of the night he was Baptized: he and his straight ways, verse 33.* See this Cloud of witnesses, and go not in a different way from what they went in, lest thou never arrive at the place they are gone to.

Eighthly, 'Tis a sin against a great many warnings, and loud calls of Providence. Every Knell thou hearest, should toll thee

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into Christ: every *Funeral* thou seest, should carry thee out of delays. Much more when *death* comes into thy House, thy Bed, thy Bowels, and snatches away those halves, those pieces of thy self, an Husband, Wife, Child. Yea every symptom of thy own decaying *Tabernacle*; *Gray hairs* are here and there upon thee: the *dimness* of thy sight gives thee a prospect of approaching darkness: the *faltering* of thy speech minds thee of the *House* of silence: the stooping of thy *back* and *head*, shows thy inclining to thy *Grave*: and thy feebleness to go may remember thee, that ere long thou must be carried forth by others. And all the turning of things upside down: and perplexing and fleeting uncertainty of Affairs in this troublesome world: may, and should provoke thy *speediest* care to get an induring substance, and to seek quickly a place in that *City* which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Ninthly, 'Tis a sin against, not only, means of *Conviction*, but actual Conviction, yea and resolutions made on that Conviction. I am persuaded few men live under any tolerable Preaching of the *Gospel*. Who do not see a need of making ready for Christ: and do
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not thereupon some times at least resolve to do it? Which gave occasion to that Proverb, that *Hell is paved with good purposes*, is full of those who resolved never to go thither: but while they stood dallying and resolving: that now they would, and then they would. First this year, and then next, they would Repent and turn to God; amend their ways, and make ready for Christ. And their *modo, modo*, was *sine modo*, and when they were about to rise, like the *Sluggard* they lye down again, to take the t'other Napp: Death takes them Napping indeed, and betwixt their making good resolutions, to do what they ought; and making good those resolutions by performing them: Christ comes and takes them away, and their purposes and promises of amendment, serve for nothing, but to aggravate their *Condemnation*, for breaking of them. And assuredly, nothing will sharpen the *String*, and envenom the teeth of the *never-dying Worm*, more than the remembrance of such convictions stifled, and such resolutions broken by delay, till 'twas too late to perform them.

Tenthly, This work can never be done too soon, therefore there is no pretence left for delay, for fear of being ready too early.

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early: thou canst never be *Justified* too soon, *Sanctified* too soon, be good too soon, be at *Peace* with God too soon. I know indeed there are wretched *Notions* of, and prejudices against *Religion*, which the *Devil* would infuse into mens minds, from whence it would follow, that 'tis safe, yea better to let it alone, till we are Old, or come to dye.

As that *Religion* is only an Art of dying happily, that *Christ* is an *Austere* Master, and thou shalt never see merry day in his service. That 'twill make thee *Melancholy*, *Emafcuate* thy Spirit with Superstitious fears, render thee morose, unsociable, a burden to thy self and others. But these cursed *slanders* smell so rank of the *Father* of lies, 'tis needless to confute them amongst sober Christians. Yet in a word,

Religion is a Discipline of living holly, in order to dying happily, of walking with God here, that we may rest with him hereafter. And *Christ* is meek and lowly in heart, Matth xi, will neither provoke nor despise his servants, and his yoke is easie, and burden light to those who willingly come under them; and will neither gawl their Necks, nor break their Backs: there is no true *Peace* but in reconcilia-

tion with God; nor Joy but to the Righteous, for light *Is sown for the Righteous,* and gladness for the upright in heart, Psalm xcvi. 11. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than when corn and wine increase,* Psalm iv. 7. When the returning Prodigal was received into his Fathers favour, then they began to be merry. The Kingdom of God (of his Grace) is *Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Yea believing in Christ, before we see him, intitles us at least, to joy unspeakable and full of glory, and tho others will not be persuaded of it, because they never felt it, rather let them be persuaded to be fit to feel it.

For Solomon hath told them, *a stranger doth not intermeddle with it.* But in themselves all wisdoms ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. And not to honour the rest of those paultry flanders, with a particular confutation: that cannot *unman* us in a base sence, which rather makes us more than men in a noble one: what rectifies, refines, exalts our Reason, what moderates, directs, subdues our passions to its conduct. What inlightens, purifies, and pacifies our Consciences. What bows and melts down our wills, into subjection to the will of God.

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God. And in a word, renues to the *Image* of Christ, and makes us *partakers* of the *Divine Nature*, can not be guilty of what's objected. And all this, is done by that, which makes us *ready* for Christ, and therefore we can never either seek or find it too soon.

Eleventhly, But it may be done *too late*, that is, be gone about too late: as thousands have found by sad experience. And O that their *harms* may be our *warnings*, that we increase not that unhappy number. The *Foolish Virgins* would have *Oyl at last*, were it to be either begged or bought: and afterward they came, *Mat. xxv. 11. With their Lord, Lord, but then the door was shut.* 'Tis ill leaving these things to an after-game. Remember *Esau*; who afterward would have inherited the blessing (which he despised before) but then he was rejected, though he sought it earnestly with tears, *Heb. xii. 17.*

When once the Master of the House is risen and hath shut the door, you may strive to enter, but must lose your labour, *Luke xiii. 24, 25.* I pray Read with consideration and Holy fear, *Prov. ii.* from the twenty-fourth to the end; and note especially verse 28. Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer: they shall seek me early but they

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they shall not find me. What they thought all in good time, and even early, for this work, they't find to their shame, to their sorrow and eternal ruin: was much too late in Gods esteem. Tho God hath promis'd to accept us when we come, He hath no where promis'd more time in which to come: the present is all we are sure of, *Now is the accepted time,* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Twelfthly, 'Tis more than time 'twere done already. If we wake not, if we rise not of our own accord, 'tis high time to do it, when our Master calls us: if we go not out to meet him, it at least becomes us to open to him when he comes and knocks. If we prevent him not by offering free possession of our hearts, there's no excuse left if we resist him, when he strives to take it, If our own *hunger*, and even *starving* at the *Hoggs Trough* (with the *prodigal*) will not drive us to him: Yet at least the killing his *Fatlings*, preparing his *Wine*, making a *Feast* and inviting us so kindly, *Come for all things are ready*, should do it, and hasten a mutual readiness in us: now God hath long called us, *Turn ye turn ye why will ye dye? Come unto me and I will refresh you.* *The Spirit and the Bride say come.*

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come. How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? He hath long stood at the door and knocke, even till his head be wet with the rain, and his locks with the dew of the night. He hath long striven by his word, by his Spirit, by his Ordinances, by his Providences: by his Mercies, by his Judgments, as we say by fair means, and by force. He hath long since made fat Provision for us, and most lovingly invited us, and told us all is ready, there's nothing wanting at the Feast but Guests. And is it not more than time, that we had answered, opened, yeilded, come long since; when he does even long to see us there: when shall it once be?

Thirteenthly, The sooner the better, admit thy delay should not prove damnable, it will certainly be very detrimental, thou'lt lose much by it, tho thou lose not all. The sooner thou comest, the welcomer thou shalt be. The youngest Disciple was the beloved Disciple. His soul desires the first ripe fruits. Gods rod was of Almond wood, the Tree which Blossoms first of all the Plants. Josiabs great encomium was: He sought the Lord God of his Fathers when he was young, but twice eight years old, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. 'Tis argued amongst Divines from what Age children

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children are accountable to God for themselves, some say from five, some say from seven years old: but all conclude that from the time they can discern betwixt Good and evil, they are bound to refuse what's evil, and to chuse what's good.

Again, the sooner thou art ready, the stronger will thy *Grace*, the surer will thy *Comforts* be, and the greater thy *Reward* in Heaven, as thou hast longer glorified God on Earth: and all the while thou stayest *unready*, thou art gathering either *Woormwood*, or *Hemlock*, the best is bitter, the worst is deadly; bitter Repentance if thou be ever ready. And thou wilt cry out with *Austin*, *Nimis sero te amare coepi*: too late, O Lord, did I begin to love thee. Rather therefore resolve with the *Orator*, *Volo tantum emergere poenitentiam*, Ile not purchase Repentance at so dear a rate, or deadly damnation if thou be never ready.

Fourteenthly, The longer thou stayest, the harder will the work be, each day lays on a stone upon the Wall of Separation, thy sins are building betwixt God and thee; and the higher 'tis raised the harder it will be to climb over. Thy iniquities increase the Floods, like *Ezechiel's* waters, and the stream which was

at

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at first but *Ankle high*, or to the *Knees*, and fordable at least, will become impassible, and in the deep waters they shall not come nigh him. The longer thou art going from God the farther off thou'lt be, and the more difficult will thy return be found. Rooted Habits are hardly eradicated, and *Custom* in sin becomes a second Nature. And as easily may the *Leopard change his spots*: or the *Ethiopian put off his skin*, as he learn to do good who is accustomed to do evil, *Jer. xiii. 23*. Custom in sin, will take away the fence of sin, and harden the heart like the neather Mill-stone. Therefore *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day*, yea rouse up your selves lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, *Heb. iii. 13*. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*, no man arrives at height of wickedness all on the sudden, but by degrees. Even depraved Nature hath some modesty left to restrain it, and that must be basted to make it impudent in sin, and braze its fore-head, to be past blushing. A fresh water-Souldier dops his head and shrinks at the discharge of single Muskets, but he that's flusht with often coming safely off, despiseth Vollies, and marches erect where the Bullets fall like a storm of Hail, and at last will run upon

upon the mouth of Canons. Experience breeds hope in evil as well as in good: and because men have long continued *unready* for Christ, and yet found no danger in it, they flatter themselves they never shall. And *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily: therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*, Eccl. viii: 11. And so what was always hard to do: at length becomes next to impossible to be done, Especially considering,

Fifteenthly, Thy strength declines, as well as thy work grows more difficult; and according to the old Verse, *Qui non est hodie, cras minus aptus erit*. He that's unfit to day, will be more unfit to morrow; for besides the decays of Nature, which are not to be despised, where the work is wholly to begin, the offers of Grace will be more rare and faint, the motions of the Spirit will be less frequent, less importunate. He hath neither delight nor list to knock at that door, which hath been barr'd so long against him; nor to expose himself to new reputations, where he hath been so often grieved, and his help rejected, and ere long he will be gone for ever, and woe be to thee when he departs from thee.

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Si ter pulsanti nemo respondet, abito. The Courts on Earth Record the third contempt for contumacy, and proceed to Sentence. And doth the Court of Heaven keep no Records? *He seals up thine iniquities in a bag*: and are not these things written in his Book. What folly is it, to lay the heaviest burden on the weakest beast! to leave that care and work to thy decrepid Age: 'When the Grasshopper shall be a burden, which the vigour of thy youth can scarcely struggle with?

Sixteenthly, Thou wilt not be served thus thy self, do as thou wouldst be done to. How irksome to thee is a loytring servant? *As vinegar to the teeth, and smock to the Eyes, so is a sluggard to them that send him*, Prov. x. 26. Thou expectest thy servant shall attend on thee, before he serve himself. Which of you having a servant Plowing, or feeding Cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, first make ready where-with I may sup, and gird thy self and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken: and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink; thou'lt rid thy House of him, who will serve himself before his Master: and make him stay his leisure, and what shall God do

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do to such an one? His are a *willing* people, and all *delay* implies unwillingness. We would never do, what we are loath to do, if we durst omit it, not love but fear begets such motion: and 'tis love to our work, which makes our working acceptable; God had as lieve you should do nothing, as do what you do, without, or against your heart.

Seventeenthly, Nay! You do not only hate *delays* in men: but you cannot bear them at the hand of God; if you be in distress, in pain, or danger, you cry out, *O God make speed to save us: O Lord make hast to help us, answer me speedily, Lord tarry not, and if he do you grow importunate. Make hast O God to deliver me: make hast to help me O Lord, Psal. lxx. 1. Make hast unto me O God, O Lord make no tarrying, verse 5. if not half impatient, Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth, Psal. clxiii. 7. My soul is vexed, but thou, O Lord, how long, Psalm vi. 3. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take Counsel in my soul dayly? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God, Psalm xiii. 1, 2, 3. If not quite so, and desperate, with that wicked*

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wicked King. *Why should I stay, or wait for the Lord any longer,* 2 Kings vi. 33. And if God should when thou roarest for horror of Conscience, or art as on a Rack with exquisite pains of *Gom*, or *Stone*, or but the *Tooth-Ache*: answer thee with such *delays* as thou dost him; and say; why such hast, all in good time, I am not at leisure, forty years hence, or twenty years hence I'll help and ease thee; be content, I can't come yet, but when I have nothing else to do I'll help thee. How would this *hope deferred make thy heart sick*? And 'tis well if thou refrain *Blaspheming* him, as one that mockt thee: and yet God must suffer all this at thine hand, be provoked and grieved forty years long, yea fifty, threescore years, and wait, and call, and cry, and reason with thee, and intreat thee, to return, to get ready for him, but all in vain, thou turnest a deaf Ear to him, and art as the *deaf Adder*, which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer charming never so wisely. And wilt neither dance to his piping, nor weep at his mourning to you. Consider this you that forget God, how, how unkindly you take it; to be forgotten of him: and you that *delay* so many years to be ready for him, how ill you can bear his

his *delaying* but a week or day, if he be not ready to relieve and help you in your fears and sorrows.

Eighteenthly, You'l not deal thus with others as you deal with God, as if 'twere only safe and faultless to despise him, not with your betters, good manners will not suffer that: you say, *'Tis fitter you should stay for them, than they for you.* Not with a *Friend* or *Neighbour*; but will rise at midnight, to lend him what he needs, or but to light his Candle. Not with an *Enemy*, but wilt *Heap coals of fire on his head to melt him*, or oblige him with preventing kindness: not with a *Beast* but if it Low for Food wilt serve it: or if it fall into a ditch, be it an Ox or Ass, wilt straightways pull it out, tho on the Sabbath day, Luke xiv. 5. Nay you will not make the *Devil* dance attendance, at the rate, you trifle with *Almighty God*, if he but whistle to you, you know his meaning and obey it, a nod, a beckon of his finger is enough; you are dry Tinder to the first spark of Temptation he cast on you, and you are quickly in a flame. But to Gods Holy motions, tho they be hot as coals of *Juniper*, you are like green wood: no blowing will suffice to dry, or make you kindle. Nay, would I could say,

say, that too many were not too quick and nimble for the *Devil* himself, save him the charge and trouble of a *temptation*; run to his work before he bids them, like high mettled Horses, start before the sign can be given, and run full speed without either Switch or Spur. And yet meanwhile quite foundred, and down right lame in the ways of God: that neither *Spur* nor *Whip*, can mend their pace. God hath not left himself without witness, that he might leave thee without excuse: his *grads* are in thy sides; his hand hath fixed them in thy very soul: for as he hath planted *punitive affections* in thee, to be his rods to whip thee for thy past offences, such as shame and grief. So hath he *quickning affections* to excite thee to thy duty; such as hope and fear, and yet thou wilt kick against these pricks, be it never so hazardous, never so hard to do so. How often hast thou felt these stings strike to thy very heart, and yet like a restive Horse, thou wilt rather winch, or kick, or run backward, or fall down, than go forward as thou oughtest. When *sickness* hath assaulted thee, and grim *Death* hath stared thee in the face, with its gastly *visage*: how have thy knees smote against each other, like *Bellhazers*! Thy Countenance

nance wax'd pale, and trembling seized thy joynts; and anguish and horror surprized thy Conscience. Like Cain; apprehending that *Every thing that met thee would kill thee*; and what killed, would damn thee. Yet after all this, thou returnest to thy old security, yea like heated water thou becomest more cold, or softned Iron, more hard than e're before.

Ninteenthly, If there be any spark of *Ingenuiry* left in thee, let's try to blow up that. Christ went not thus *lingringly* about the work He undertook for thy sake. But he left the Mansions of Glory, and came down from Heaven, more willingly than thou canst be persuaded to go thither. *Lo I come to do thy will O my God. In the volume of thy book it is written of me. He came leaping over the hills, skipping over the mountains.* Conquering all difficulties in the way. *With desire he desired to eat that Passover* he knew was to be his last, and himself immediately to succeed it. *I have a Baptism to be Baptized with, and how am I strained till it be accomplished?* And when his hour was come he *delays* not one hour longer, but went to *Jerusalem* where he was to dye. When they sought to take him, he called the *Traytor* friend, which
kist

kist him into their hands, yea offered himself to them of his own accord, *whom seek ye! I am he*, and when that word had struck them down, he let them rise, and bind, and carry him away, tho *he had more than twelve legions of Angels* ready for his Rescue. 'Twere endless to reckon up those many Arguments you meet with in History, to shew how readily he went about that dreadful work, and how active he was in his Bloody *Passion*. Read, Believe, Consider these things well: and for shame make more hast to be ready to attain that blessedness with him: for the procuring which, he was so ready to be made a *curse* for thee:

Twentiethly, This thy *delay* wounds God in his tenderest part, his Eye, his Heart, his Bowels. A wound is troublesome where ere 'tis fixt, but neither so painful nor so mortal in an Arm or Leg, as in some vital part. To wound God in the Foot of his Providence, the Arm of his Power, or Hand of his Justice, is a provocation, but not like wounding him in the Eye of his Pitty, Heart of his Grace and Mercy, and the Bowels of his tender Compassions. All the most amiable and endearing *Attributes* of God, shine most resplendently in this work of God; to
give

give his Son for sinners. and for sinners to refuse this Gift, despise this Love, make light of it, as not worth receiving, or preparing to receive it, what can be more provoking?

But set aside at present, the consideration of all the rest, and think what the abuse of his patience alone amounts to: *Rev. ii. 21. I gave her space to repent and she repented not: was the most killing Article in Christs charge against Jesabel. Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering: not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. This is the sin by which men Treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. For as Gods long suffering should be Salvation to us, the abuse of it becomes the surest, and the forest Damnation. Laesa patientia fit furor, abused patience turns into fury. And God swears in his wrath at last, They shall never enter into his rest, who had grieved him, by refusing the tenders of it, forty years together.*

Twenty firstly, This delay turns thy light into darkness, thy very Prayers into sin, for either thou canst not Pray as thou oughtest, for the coming of Christ to Judgment, *come Lord Jesus come quickly,*

or thou Prayest against thy own life, and so against thy own heart: and dost but mock God: and wouldst not have him take thee at thy word, as St. *Augustine* bewaylingly confest, when he Prayed for Continence, before his Conversion, *Aud domine, sed non modo*, Lord hear me, but not yet, because he was afraid to lose his pleasing Lusts. So when thou sayest, *The Kingdom come*, either thou considerest not what thou sayest, or only sayest it in custom and formality: for neither wouldst thou have the *Kingdom* of his Grace come which thou willfully opposest: nor the *Kingdom* of his Glory for which thou refusest obstinately to be ready; and nothing would afright thee more than pregnant symptoms of its near approach and speedy coming; and wouldst, as in a by-word men say *Witches* do: say thy Prayers backward, let not thy Kingdom come: but stay I pray thee till I be ready for it.

Twenty secondly, Tho thou *delay* and *loyterest*: yet other things do not *Time* tarrys not, that's in perpetual *Flux* and sliding on, thou mayest take off the *Weights* of thy *Clock*, and stop its Motion but thou canst not stop the *Course* of the *Sun* in the Firmament as *Joshuah* did. Nor bring it back as it was by *Isaias* Pray

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in *Hezekiah's* case; which was an Emblem of the adding more years to his life, as well as a sign, that God would do it. Thou mayest turn thy *Glass* sideling and hinder its running, but canst not withhold thy *Pulse* from beating, all whose strokes are numbred by that God which made it: and which number it shall not exceed. *Death* tarries not, but is riding Post upon the *Pale Horse*: he never draws Bitt. He neither Baits, nor stays, till he hath reached his journies end, and done his errand: which is to Arrest thee, and take thee up behind him, and carry thee to him who sent him for thee. Once more *Judgment* and *Damnation* tarry not. There's swift destruction hastening towards them, who hasten not to be ready for Christ. And 'tis spoken very Emphatically, 2 Pet. ii. 3. *Whose Judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their Damnation slumbereth not.* There are but two impediments of speed, as one observes upon this place, either *lazing* in Bed, with the *sluggard*: a little more *slumbring*, a little more *folding of the Arms to sleep*, before he rise: or *loytring* with the *slouthful*, when he is up; but both these are expressly denied: neither *slumbers* in Bed, nor *lingers* when risen, there-

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fore all impediments to speed are taken away.

O therefore rouse up thy self, flee, tarry not, *What meanest thou o sleeper?* Arise, there's a storm upon thee, call upon God in good earnest, and hasten thy escape from this stormy wind and tempest. One word; the *Philistins* are upon the *Sampson*; rous'd that drowsie sinner, tho he slept on an enchanted Pillow, the knees of his *Dalilah*. O that a greater and more frightful word, might waken thee! *Hell and Damnation*, the *Devil* and his *Legions* are upon thee: leap out of *Dalilah's* lap, and with repentance for sleeping there so long, flee to the Arms of Christ. Make thy self ready for *Abrahams* bosome. Is it not high time to fly to the City of refuge, when the *Avenger of blood* is at our very heels, and wants but one step to reach us with the fatal thrust! therefore as *Jonathan* cryed after the Lad, but meant it as a warning to *David* to escape the wrath of *Saul*. So I to you, *Make speed, hast, stay not,* 1 Sam. xx. 38.

Lastly, This tempting to *Delay*, is the *Devils* last and worst stratagem against thy soul. 'Tis true, he will if he can, keep thee in ignorance, sensuality, prophane's, formality without once suffering thee to think

think of God or Heaven, of Death or Judgment, of thy soul and its concerns. But if thou get out of this *Dungeon*, and begin to see the light, and by some startling Providence, or rousing Sermon, beest put in mind of these matters, and so resolvest to look better to them, and to turn to God, and *prepare* in earnest for death, and for the coming of Christ, because thou seest the indispensable necessity of all this.

Then will *Satan* disguise himself into an *Angel of Light*, and not only allow, but applaud all those thy purposes: that he may be less suspected as the Author of the last suggestion, with which, as his *Master-piece*, he intends to assault thee, to thy utter ruin; and therefore hee'l whisper to thy heart, to this, or the like purpose. Repent and turn to God! Ay, God forbid thou shouldest not; save thy soul and get to Heaven! Yes what shouldst thou do else? Who but a fool or a madman would neglect it? Who would, *who can, dwell with everlasting burnings?* Thou deservest to be damn'd, and damn'd again, if thou wouldest not resolve to be sav'd and go to Heaven. But let me mind thee yet of one thing: thou knowest 'tis an *old saying* and a true: *fair and softly goes*

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far, no more hast than good speed: 'tis all in good time for these matters yet: the work is not so hard, as some would make thee believe; God is merciful, and Christ dyed for sinners, and God hath sworn he desires not their death: and said that *At what time soever they repent, he will receive them.* And besides thou art young and strong, and hast many businesses to mind, and men must not neglect their Callings, and providing for their Families: and after these are done, then mayest thou mind *Religion*, with less distraction, having settled and dispatcht thy other necessary Affairs first; and tho thou beest pritty old, such and such as thou knowest are ten or twenty years older, and pretty lusty still and thou mayest live as long as they.

And suppose the worst come that can, that thou shouldest be taken *sick*: 'tis time enough, then to repent, and cry God mercy; and thou mayest send for thy Minister to comfort thee, and get good people to Pray for thee, and 'tis but repenting, and that thou mayest do then, for *True Repentance*, you have often heard, *is never too late*, and therefore why shouldst thou divert thy self from thy business, and put thy self into a way thou wilt not like

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like so well, when thou knowest it better, as perhaps thou thinkest thou shalt. For I must tell thee tho *Religion* have its use, yea and sweetnes, yet no Rose grows without its prickles, thou mayest find some thing in it, which thou'lt like better on a death Bed, then at present: and here hee'l besprinkle it, with some fly and sinister reflections. And farther, 'twas very well this thing was in thy heart, God knows thy *purposes*, and good meanings, and he approves them, and will accept them, tho thou shouldest never perform them, at least, not at present. These, and such as these, are the *suggestions* wherewith the Devil will assault thee, to intangle thee in farther *delay*, and if by this gilding, he can make thee swallow this poysoned Pill, 'tis ten to one, thou art lost for ever; he knows well, this is the most critical juncture in thy whole life, and thy being a Saint or a sinner for ever, almost wholly depends upon it. If when thou art enlightned, convinced, resolved to turn to God in earnest, and to *hear his voice to day, while 'tis called to day*, and dost say and hold. And *deferrest not to pay what thou hast vowed*: my life for thine, thou art safe. But it the Devil play this last Engine so cunningly, as to
demolish

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demolish the Fort of thy *resolutions*, abate thy present Fervours, cool thy warmed Affections, turn thee from thy *purposes*, especially if he have done it twice or thrice before, I will not say thy case is desperate; but I should be unfaithful, and false to thy soul if I should not tell thee it is very dangerous, See *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.* and *2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.* I beseech you therefore by the Mercies of God; by the Blood of Christ, which he shed to *Justifie* you, and by the love of the Spirit, which he first purchased, and then sent to *sanctifie* you: That you Watch be strong, and acquit yourselves like men, and *take to you all the Armour of God*; that you may resist the battery of this worst of *Satans* Engines, and defeat the most dangerous of all his *stratagems*, to involve you in *Procrastination*: by giving up your selves speedily to God, and Christ, according to what ever convictions, have been upon you, that you ought; and resolutions, that you would so do, and be ready quickly.

I would add no more, did not one word remain, which may seem fit, to clinch and rivet that Nail, I have been forcing home, with so many blows. And I shall take it out of your own mouths. Methinks I hear

hear some say, why so many *Arguments* in so clear a case? and others ready to make the number occasion of their laughter, and others, 'twas good, if it had not been so long: but it was cruel tedious.

Well, be it so, admit it had been delivered at this length, (which yet by the way it was not) let me in cool blood, debate the case with these *Objectors*, before we part. Is the case so clear in thy opinion, that 'tis superfluous to multiply *Arguments* to prove it? *Out of thy own mouth shalt thou be judged thou sloathful servant.* Why dost thou continue to Rebel against thy light? Why dost thou still delay? That's enough which doth the work it is designed to: but that's too little which doth it not. The *Motives* may be enough to leave thee inexcusable, but they are not enow for thee, till they effectually persuade thee to leave thy sin, and escape thy danger. And for the next, must I bear your petulant scorn, for remembering you of returning to God, with such a number, and shall it cost you nothing, to forget him days without number? Do you now laugh because the *Motives* are so many? And what will you do, when

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when God shall laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh, because these many were too few to make you take warning? To make you wise to prevent them, and escape them.

Is it so tedious to you to hear your sins Arraigned and Condemned a long hour. And what is it to God to be dishonoured and provoked by them all thy life long? Is it a load which breaks the back of thy *Patience*, to hear *Motives* multiplied, to turn thee *Speedily*? And is it no dangerous tryal of Gods *Patience*, to load him with thy multiplied sins, as a *Cart* is loaden with *Sheaves* and pressed down?

If it be wearisome to hear thy sins reproved? How much more Just is Gods complaint, *They have wearied me with iniquities, and made me serve with their sins!* In a word, if I have been thought long in calling you to turn to God: how long doth God think your refusing to return? And how tedious will it be, to bear the eternal reproaches of thy own heart, and lashes of thy own enraged *Conscience*, for that refusal? Which nothing can exempt thee from, but taking the Councel I have
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so plainly given. Consider what I have said, and the Lord give us understandings, and hearts to close with it, that when ever Christ comes He may find us Ready. *Amen.*

Of giving. Consider what I have
said, and the word give as understand-
ings and hearts to close with in that
which ever Christ comes he may find us

A
DISCOURSE

Shewing the
Sinfulness and Danger of Put-
ting-off our Great WORK:

BEING

The Substance of a Sermon deliver'd
at the Funeral of Mr. *David Geer*,
at *St. Botolph's-Aldgate*.

Upon St. JOHN ix. iv.

*I must work the Works of Him that sent
me, while it is Day: The Night com-
eth, when no Man can work.*



His Chapter contains the
History of one of the
chief *Miracles*, which our
Blessed Saviour wrought
whilst He was in this
World: That is, His o-
pening the Eyes of the
Man which was born Blind. And it is Re-
corded more largely, than any of his won-
derful

derful Works, (except his Raising *Lazarus* from the Dead) for it fills a whole long *Chapter* to declare, the Occasion of it, the Work it self, and what followed upon it: and affords Matter of so many useful and choyce Observations, 'tis some difficulty to pass them by: For it did not only Confirm his Mission and Doctrine to be from *God*; but the very *Miracle* it self was Doctrinal; the Man's being born Blind, figuring that Spiritual Blindness under which we are all Born; and *Christ's* Healing him, and the Manner of it, shewing from whence, we must expect the true Eye-Salve. But I must confine my self, to what the present Solemn Occasion directly minds us of.

The Words I have read, were pronounced by our *Lord*, as an Introduction to the Work, when he address'd himself to the Performance of it; and discover his Faithful Obedience, and Excellent Wisdom in improving the *Seasons*, for fulfilling the Works his Father sent him into this World for: And commend to us a Truth of general Use, and universal Obligation; tho our *Lord* vouchsafes to apply it to Himself, in this particular Case.

I confess, the Words have not the Form of a Precept; but they have the Force,
yea,

yea, more than the Force, of a single Command, & press the Duty more Home, than if it had been said expressly, *Work while it is Day*: For First, They are an *Example* given in the Person of him whom we are bound to imitate and follow; whose Works are Vocal, and whose Actions are our Instructions. He being the Son of God, and our Lord and Master, saying, *I must work*; 'tis as if a Son in the Family should say to the Servants, or a Wealthy fore-handed Man to his poor Neighbours, who have nothing but their Hands to Live on: *What ever you do, I must mind my Business; I must labour, and not squander away one Day after another; my Father will not suffer it in me; and I should quickly be undone by such a Course.* Such Words, spoken in their own Persons, are more awakening, more pungent, than if they only bid them mind their Business: For they smartly and sarcastically reproach their *Sloth*, and upbraid them for their *Loytering*.

For if the Master of the Family will not bear it in a Son, much less will he in a Servant; and if he that's well beforehand, must be industrious to prevent Poverty and Want; much more must he,

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that hath but from Hand to Mouth.

But the quickning Influence of the *Example* is not all: For, *Secondly*, The Reason by which it is enforced, shews it extends to many. For when He had said, *I must work, &c. while 'tis Day*; when he comes to give the Reason of it, he saith not, *The Night cometh, when I can't work*; but, *When no Man can work*; ('tis St. Chrysostome's Note) thereby clearly implying, that the Duty reaches all, whom the Reason of the Duty reaches: and amounts to thus much; That every Man who hath Work to do, which must be done by Day, and cannot be done by Night, must hasten to dispatch it, while the Day lasts; lest he be surprized and prevented by the Nights Approach.

Having thus briefly clear'd my Passage to what I design, by shewing, that the Words, tho spoken by our Lord of Himself; yet are fairly Applicable unto others, and may have Efficacious Influence both upon their Duty, and their Wisdom, to engage them to improve their *Opportunities* speedily, for the Work of God, and their own Souls; which I could make good by more than Twenty of the best *Expositors*, both Antient and Modern, if 'twere needful. I shall now proceed
to

of Deferring Repentance.

to grasp the Strength and Scope of the whole *Verse*; into one full and comprehensive Observation, alwayes Useful, and to the present Occasion very Seasonable.

Take it in these plain Words, and easie to be understood:

The Consideration of the Work we have to do, and the Time allowed, and limited, for the Doing of it in, indispensably oblige us, to the utmost Speed and Diligence, in the Doing of it.

I conceive, these Expressions are fairly Commensurate with the *Text*: And, as they leave out nothing, which is material in it; so they add nothing to it, but what is evidently Comprehended in it; as will be farther manifest, by explaining these Three Particulars.

1. What is meant by this *Work* we have to do.

2. What is the *Time* or *Season* allowed to do it in, call'd in the *Text* a *Day*, or *While it is Day*.

3. What is the *Limitation*, by which this *Time* is bounded, and to which it is restrained; which is partly imply'd in calling

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it a *Day*, which is a definite, and measur'd Portion of Time, partly express'd in the word *Night*, which puts an End and Period to the *Day*.

These, as they relate to *Christ*, (which I touch, because he first applyes them to Himself, and shall after wholly wave and supersede) were as to his *Work*: To prove Himself to be the Son of *God*; the True, the Promised *Messiah*: To reveal the Will and Counsel of his *Father*, to the World: To shew to Men the way of Salvation, and Eternal Life: To declare the Covenant of Grace, and Preach the *Gospel*: And to manifest both Himself, and his Doctrine to be of *God*, by working many, and mighty *Miracles*; and by speaking, as never any other Man spake; and doing such *Works*, as never any other Man did; and Approving Himself mighty both in Word and Deed, before *God*, and all the People, Luk. 24. 19. till he had confirm'd the Faith of them who believed in Him, and left the Incredulous and Obstinate without Excuse: And such was the *Work* of Opening the Eyes of him that was born Blind, Recorded in this Chapter; and the Words he spake upon that Occasion.

Secondly,

Secondly, For His Day. It was the Time allotted him of his *Father*, to continue in this World; the Season of his Ministry, the Space in which a Restraint was laid upon the Powers of Darkneſs, from hindring him to fulfil all that was fore-told concerning him, and to accomplish all that was needful to be done, for his *Father's* Glory, and his Peoples Salvation, before his laſt Suffering.

Thirdly, The Night was his *Death*, and going out of this World; the *Hour* of the *Wicked*, and the *Power* of *Darkneſs*, to which he was to be ſubject in his Paſſion, St. Luk. 22. 53. in which, according to his *Father's* Determinate Counſel, he did voluntarily ſuſpend his Power of working *Miracles*, and would not deliver Himſelf; but ſuffered Himſelf, firſt to be *Apprehended*, and then *Condemned to Dye*, and then by *Wicked Hands* to be *Crucified* and *Slain*, Act. 2. 23.

I have thus briefly glanc'd at the Meaning of the *Words*, as they relate to our *Saviour*, to whom they were primarily apply'd; that this may facilitate the Underſtanding of them, as applicable to our ſelves; to which I ſhall confine my ſelf, in the Handling and Improving of them: And therefore, the *Work* to be

done, as it concerns us, is to believe in *Jesus Christ*. This is *St. Chrysostome's*; from *Joh. 6. 28, 29.* *What shall we do, that we may work the Works of God?* *Jesus* answered, and said unto them, *This is the Work of God, that ye Believe on Him, whom He hath sent.* That is the Work He hath enjoyn'd us, according to *1 Joh. 3. 23.* *This is his Commandment, That ye Believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.* Our Work is to Repent sincerely of our Sins, and turn to God with our whole Hearts, and to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

Thus *Gregory the Great*, upon the *Fourth Penitential Psalm*: What are these Works of his Father, which he sayes, *Are to be wrought by Day, and not by Night? Nisi agri intellectualis cultura*; The Tillage and Cultivating of our Souls; which the Prophet *Jeremiah's* Description of Repentance, agrees well with, *Jer. 4. 3, 4.* *Break up your Fallow Ground, and sow not among Thorns: Circumcise your selves unto the Lord, and take away the Fore-skin of your Hearts: Kill the Thorns and Weeds of your Lusts and Corruptions, by plowing up the Roots of them, by the Plough of Godly Sorrow, Mortification, and Amendment of Life.* This Work is, To
work

work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, Phil. 2. 12. In a word, It is to become good Men, good Christians, and to live as becomes those who profess to be such; to get our Peace made with Heaven; to be fit to Dye; to Glorify God, and to save our own Souls; which is the *One Thing necessary*, the Work God hath sent us into this World for.

Secondly, The Time, the Season, allowed us to do this Work in, is the *Day* of our Natural Life; as a Good *Expositor* upon the Words, *The space of every Mans Life, is his Day*: Therefore, as the Shortness of the Day quickens Work-men to Industry and Sedulity, lest the Darkness of the Night should over-take them, in the Midst of their Endeavours, and before their Work is finished: So we, knowing the Time of our *Life* is but short, should be ashamed and afraid to loyter, and freeze in Sloath and Idleness; and must not *delay* at all, lest our *Opportunities* slip from us, past Recovery. And farther, Our *Day* is the *Day* of Grace, while we have the Sun of Righteousness shining in the Light of the *Gospel*; and while we have God's Ordinances without, and the Motions and Assistance of his Spirit within, before the Means of Sal-

vation be taken from us, or the Blessing be taken from the Means: And God's blessed Spirit, for our often quenching, grieving, and resisting of Him, and refusing his proffered Aids, and gracious Help; withdraw, and leave us, and Blackness of Darkness over-shade, yea over-whelm, our Minds; as the Dreadful Beginnings of Eternal Night.

Thirdly, By Night, which limits our Day, is to be understood (as may be gathered from the Opposition betwixt these two) the contrary, to what is meant by Day. And therefore it signifies our Natural Death, or any notable Degree or Tendency toward it. Loss of our Senses, Reason, or such decays of them, as make us incapable of Acting as Men, in our great Concerns: Or the setting of the Gospel Sun: the removal of God's Kingdom and Candlestick: God's departure from us, and taking away his Light and Guidance: His Grace and Spirit; without which, we can do nothing but wander, and wilder, and lose our selves and do no Work, but what hath Death for its Wages; and find no way, but what leads down to Hell. To Sum up this plain Explication in the easiest Words I can: We are indispen-

dispensably bound, and it infinitely concerns us, to make hast to Believe, Repent, get our Peace made with God, and to be ready to Dye, while God spares our Lives, and continues the Gospel, and the means of Grace amongst us, and offers us his Help, by the frequent motions of his Spirit. For as this Work may be happily done by Day; that is, while these Mercies are continued; so if they be taken away, and Night over take us, before our Work be done, it is impossible it ever should be done; and we must be undone for Ever.

I now return to the Observation, into which I graspt the scope, and substance of the Text, which was this. The Consideration of the Work we have to do; and the Season allowed, and limited for the doing of it in, oblige us indispensably, to utmost speed and diligence in the doing of it.

The Holy Scripture is very copious, and full in pressing both speed and diligence, upon the accounts this Observation intimates, it shall suffice to name a few at present for Confirmation, *Isa. 55. 6. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while he is near;* which supposeth, what *Psal. 32. 6. expres-*
ses

ses there is a Time, in which there's no coming near Him, *Like 13. 24.* Strive to enter in at the straight Gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able: when once the Master of the House is risen, and hath shut the Door, *Joh. 12. 35.* Yet a little while is the Light with you; walk while ye have the Light, lest Darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in Darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth: While ye have Light believe in the Light, *Eccles. 9. 10.* Whatever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with thy Might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest. And of how much greater consequence thy Work is, so much greater in Reason, should be both thy Speed and Diligence.

I now proceed to the proof of the Observation, and to shew the Reasons, why 'tis so necessary to be Speedy and Diligent about this Work: and because those Reasons are usually most cogent and forceable, which are drawn from the Nature of the thing, which is to be confirmed by them, I will take them all from the Text it self, which is like some well-stor'd Mansion, or noble Seat, which is Furnish'd with all needful Provisions, within its own Bounds. And

And *First*, Because 'tis *Work*.

Secondly, Because a *Convenient Season* is allowed to do it in.

Thirdly, Because this *Season* is of *Uncertain Continuance*, will not last always, and may slip from us suddenly, 'ere we be aware.

First, 'Tis *Work*: Work with an *Emphasis*; our main-business, not our by-business, though too many make it so. The great *Errand*, upon which God sent Us into this World. *Moses* tells Us, 'tis not a *vain thing*; but 'tis our *Life*, our Life is lent Us for it; and our Life depends upon it, *Deut.* 32. 47. The Comfort of it here, and the Safety of it hereafter; another manner of Work than heaping up Riches, for that's a *vain thing*, *Psal.* 39. 6. with *Job* 'tis the only Work of true *Wisdom*, *Job.* 28. 28. And unto Man he said; Behold the fear of the Lord that is *Wisdom*, and to depart from Evil, is *Understanding*. A Man, a Wise Man, who only deserves the name of a Man, should count nothing else comparatively worth his Care.: 'tis *David's Unum petis*, *Psal.* 27. 4. The one thing he desired of God, to enjoy Opportunities

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to help him in this Work. 'Tis Solomons *Totum hominis*, the whole of Man's Duty and Happiness, Eccles. 12. 13. Let us hear the Consolation of the whole Matter, fear God and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole of Man. 'Tis St. Paul's great Race. His *hic labor hoc opus*, 1 Cor. 9. 24. So Run that ye may obtain; so Fight (against your Spiritual Enemies) as Men that are in earnest, make not vain Flourishes, only to beat the Air: So strive, that you may Win and Wear an incorruptible Crown; in a word, from our Lords own Mouth, 'tis *primum querendum*, Mat. 6. 33. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness; and the *unum necessarium*, St. Luke 10. 42. But one thing is needful: Signally, and Eminently the Work of God, which He hath given Us to do, Joh. 6. 29.

Now this Consideration, that Religion, the Glorifying God, the Saving of our own Souls, is Work, our great Work implies these Five things.

1. It's necessity it must be done.
- 2ly. It's priority, it must not be postponed, but first done.
- 3ly. It's difficulty, it must not be trifled in; but done with all our Skill and Might.
- 4ly.

4ly. It's perfection, it must not be done by halves.

5ly. It's certain Reward; all Work shall have it's Wages.

All which Mighty Weights, one would think, might stir a quick and vigorous Motion, in the most rusty Engine; I mean, the most restive lazy Soul: if we would hang them on, with due and frequent Meditation.

Let Us consider them a little, one by one.

First, Because 'tis our *Work* it must be done, what ever else be left undone, or we must be undone Eternally, by, and for, neglecting it. Remember the Doom of the *Slothful Servant*, who neglected to get, what he knew he should have had, and had Opportunity to have provided, *St. Mat. 22. 13. Bind him Hand and Foot, and Cast him into utter Darknes.* You may Read his Fault in his Punishment; one is the *Anagram* of the other. He bound his own Hands and Feet with Cords of Sloath and Negligence; and now His Master causes them to be bound with Chains of Vengeance. He *Slept* away the Light vouchsaf him, as if it had been *Night*: and now he shall have *Darkness*

Darkness to extremity; but such as will never yield him Rest or Sleep.

This being our *Work*, it is so necessary, it must not be neglected by any means, upon any pretence whatever; though it were to give outward Attendance on *Christ* himself, as he told *Martha* plainly, preferring *Maries* sitting at His Feet, to hear His Word, and minding this one *needful thing*, before all *Martha's* troublesome Diligence; in which, she was Cumbred with much Serving, to make Provision for Him; 'tis more necessary then to Eat; therefore, *Job* esteemed God's Words, more, not only than his Dainty, but his Dayly, his Necessary Food, *Job. 23. 12.* *St. Paul*, but to promote this *Work* in others, saith, *Necessity is laid upon me, and Woe be unto me, if I Preach not the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9. 16.* And may not we, should not we all say, *Necessity is laid upon us, and Woe be unto us, if we Believe not, if we Obey not the Gospel?*

'Tis more necessary than to Live; Holy Men of God have willingly spent their Lives to help others in this *Work*. Neither count I my Life dear to me, so that I might finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry which I have Received of the Lord

Lord Jesus, to Testify the Gospel of the Grace of God, Act. 20. 24. Yea, our Lord himself counted this *His Meat and Drink*, and refus'd his bodily Food, even when He was Hungry, to Feed on this. St. John 4. 32, 34. Yea, He esteem'd it so necessary, that He came down from Heaven, endured the *Cross*; and Bore the Law's *Curse*, and his Father's *Wrath*, to Accomplish it.

In a word, The End is more necessary than all the Means conducing to it; and next to God's Glory, our own Salvation is the ultimate End of all we have, or are, or do; and therefore, more necessary than them, all put together. When some told good Dr. *Reignolds*, He would Kill himself with Studying and Preaching, advis'd him to spare himself; He reply'd, *Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causam*: He would not to save Life, neglect that, for which God gave him Life; and for which alone, it is worth while to Live. Good Lord! That Men can find time for every thing else, and account the most trivial Matters worthy of their Care; and can find neither, for this great, this necessary Work.

'Twas a smart *Sarcasm*, which the Great *Augustus* cast upon the *Gaulish Ladies*;

dyes; when He saw them playing with their Dogs in their Laps: *Have the Women in this Country no Children?* Implying that 'twas a shame to neglect their Children; and to prefer their Dogs into their Place. So may I say with Wonder and Amazement: Have these Men no *God* to Serve, no *Soul* to Save, no greater, no better *Work* to do, than to mind their Pleasures, and their Profits; their Follies, and their Lusts? As if nothing might be slighted, but what of all things ought least so to be: the *Work*, God sent you into the World, and call'd you into His Church, for your only *Necessary Business*. O besotted Sinners, Who hath bewitch't you, thus to pervert the Design of God, and to misundertand your own Interest? Awake, awake, Rouse up your selves, shew your selves Men; and make that your Business in good earnest, which God hath made your great, your only necessary *Work*.

Secondly, Because 'tis *Work*, it claims Precedency, it must not be *Post-pon'd*, thrust back; but first dispatcht, and not give place to our By-business: this is your Method in all other Cases. First *Work*, then *Recreation*, if any time be spare,

spare, when Work is Finish't. You send not your Children to their Play in the Morning, and bid them go to School, when they have play'd enough: but first to school, and let them play when they have learn't their Lesson. The Heathen could say, *A Jove principium*, we must begin with God, and our Lord bids *Us first seek God's Kingdom, and its Righteousness.*

Christ is *Alpha*, and *Omega*, *The First, and the Last*, Rev. I. 11. And we must begin and end with Him, make His Service our first Care, and His Glory our last End. And Reason saith, *Work* must be First, because that may be wisely left longest undone; which will occasion least *Prejudice*, if it be left quite undone for Ever. Now if this *Work* be done, thou art safe and well, though you have no time to do the rest: yea, if time fail, you will not need the rest: for time, and the use of Temporal things dye both together, and are rak't up in one anothers Ashes: and when thou art got to Heaven, thou'lt want neither House nor Land, nor Meat nor Money, nor secular Knowledge nor Honour, nor Wife nor Children; but God and Christ will be enough, and more than All to thee, and 'twill never

never grieve thee there, that thou hadst not got this, or the other thing, to leave behind thee: but on the other side, if beginning at the wrong end, thou hast accomplish't all thy designs, brought all thy Ends together, and obtained more than Heart could wish, and wantest nothing but an *Interest in Christ*, and *readiness to Dye*; and then be snatcht away to Hell, (like the *Rich Fool* in the Gospel, who never dreamt of that amidst his Plenty:) The Remembrance of what thou once was Master of, will yield thee no more Relief, than *Dives's* faring Deliciously on Earth, contributed to the cooling of his Tongue, when he was tormented in those Infernal Flames.

Thirdly, Because 'tis *Work*, 'tis difficult; all Work hath something hard in it, else 'twere miscall'd to call it *Labour*: All Arts require painful Study, and all Study causes Wearyness. But, *Omnium Difficillima, ars facilitatis*, The Art of being Happy, is of all the Hardest, because of all the most Excellent. The Righteous are hardly saved, 1 Pet. 4. 18. The Way to Hell is broad and smooth, of easie Descent: But the Way to Heaven is strait and rugged, and must be climb'd with Labour. I say not this to fright you out on't, but to provoke

provoke your Diligence. 'Tis a *Greek Proverb*, *The Gods give Nothing, but sell All that's Good*. The Price they sell it for, is *Labour*. When a *Leader* tells his *Souldiers*, before a *Storm* or *Battle*, how *Valiant* and *Stout* their *Enemies* are, and what *Men* of *Mettle* they must grapple with; 'tis not to daunt them, or give them an *Excuse* to turn their backs, and run away; but to inflame their *Courage*, and whet their *Valour*. So when the *Scripture* tells us, *Our Adversary the Devil, is a Roaring Lyon*; 'tis not to scare us, but make us watchful, and to provoke us to Resist him Manfully. And when it tells us, *We wrestle not with (weak) Flesh and Blood, but Principalities and Powers*, Eph. 6. 'tis to mind us to gird on our *Armour*, and bestir our selves with becoming *Boldness*, and stand our *Ground* with *Resolution*: The things *Religion* is compar'd to, and the *Emblems* of a *Christian*, speak it to be hard: A *Fighting Souldier*; a *Contending Racer*; a *Wrestling Combatant*; a *Laborious Husbandman*; a *Trading, Travelling Merchant*. Many *Corruptions* must be mortify'd; *Right Eyes* pluck't out, *Right Hands* cut off. Many *Temptations* must be resisted, many *Enemies* must be vanquish't, many *Graces* must be acquired, many *Duties*

ties must be learnt, and practis'd. And, Who can reckon all this Easy, and like to cost no *Pains*, but he that never tryed, never considered what 'tis to be a *Christian indeed*? Therefore, flatter not your selves, that you can attain it, how and when you please: But learn this Discipline betimes, *Exercise your selves to Godlyness* continually, stand upon your Guard, take to your selves the *Whole Armour of God*: But above all, betake thy self to *Christ's Protection*, and *God's Assistance*: That when thou art weak in thy self, thou may'st be strong in Him; that thou may'st *Do all Things through Christ that strengthens thee*, tho thou could'st do nothing in thy self: That thou may'st be *Strong in the Lord, and the Power of his Might*: Yea, may'st be *more than Conqueror, through Him that loved thee*; and bids thee, *Be of good Cheer*, because *He hath over-come for thee*.

Fourthly, Because 'tis *Work*, it must be carryed on unto *Perfection*: It must not be begun only, and continued in a little, but finish't; or else as good ne'r a whit, as ne'r the better: As in a *Race*, you must run to the *End* of it, and come timely to the *Goal*; or you had as good not *start*, at the giving of the *Signe*.

You know the reproach and loss that
Builder

Builder incur'd, in the Gospel-Parable, who began to Build, but was not careful to Finish; and the Galatians, though they ran well for some time; yet because they gave over, and made an unreasonable halt, are called Fools, and compared to Men bewitch'd, for stopping in so good a Course. *He that putt his Hand to the Plough, must not look back.* Lot's Wife went out of Sodom, yet she never reach'd to Zoar. Christ had many Disciples, Who Walkt with Him a while, and then forsook Him, and Walk't no more with Him, Job. 6. 6. and their short Discipleship profited them nothing. Beginning in the Spirit, will not advantage those who End in the Flesh. When the Righteous Man turns away from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the Wicked Man doth; Shall he Live? All his Righteousness which he hath done, shall not be mentioned: In his Trespasse that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he Dye, Ezek. 18. 24. He that's but half a Christian, shall be wholly Damn'd.

'Tis the End, which Crowns the Work. Rev. 3. 11. Behold I come quickly; hold fast that thou hast, that no Man take thy Crown:

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Crown, and 2. 10. Be then Faithful to the Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life; if the Salt lose its Savour, it is fit for nothing but the Dunghil. Eternal Life is promised to them, Who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for Glory, Rom. 2. 7. Let us therefore endeavour to Perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. Remembring what Christ Wrote to the Church of Sardis, who had a Name to Live, and was Dead, Rev. 3. 2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to dye: for I have not found thy Works perfect before God. Thou can'st not be ready to dye in a good sence: if the best things in thee, be ready to dye in so bad an one.

Fifthly, Because 'tis a Work, it shall be Rewarded. This I add, that you may not want incouragement, amidst so many difficulties. And I hope, we may innocently speak God's Language, without suspicion or danger, of poisoning it with the fond Opinion of Merit. How often do we read, thy Work shall be Rewarded? and, Who rendereth to every Man according to his Works; and verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, and the like. Every Work shall have its proportionable

portionable Recompence. The same Chapter which gives us this Rule, *He that cometh to God, must believe, that HE IS, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*, Heb. 11. 6. gives us the Example of Moses having Respect to the Recompence of the Reward, Vers. 26. Every Work shall have its Wages: If we do our Own Work, we must be our Own Pay-Masters; and, if the Devil's, we must expect no better than he useth to give. But if we be Speedy, Faithful, Diligent, in this Work of God, we may expect, and shall not be disappointed, of God's Reward; yea, that He Himself will be our Exceeding great Reward, as He promised the Father of the Faithful, Gen. 15. 1. and will perform to all his Children. Let us therefore, not be weary in Well-doing; for in due time we shall Reap, if we faint not, Gal. 6. 9. Wherefore, *Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord; knowing that of the Lord, you shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*, Col. 3. 24. *who is not Unrighteous, to forget your Labour of Love*, Heb. 6. 10. If this were not a Work appointed, and enjoined of God, all our Recompence might be, *Who hath required these Things at your Hands?* But seeing it is the Work of God,

we so run, not as uncertain, that is, not as uncertain of Assistance; for He will help us to do His own Work: nor of Acceptance; for He cannot but be pleased to see His own Work carried on: nor of a Gracious Reward; for *He is Faithful, who hath promised; and the Promise of Eternal Life, is made by that God who cannot Lye, Tit. 1. 2.*

Therefore, my Beloved, be ye Steadfast and Unmoveable, alwayes abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 15. 58.

And *This* may suffice to provoke our Speed and Diligence, from the First Consideration, *That 'tis Work*; implying its Necessity, its Precedency, its Difficulty, its required Perfection, and its sure Reward.

I proceed to the *Second Reason, While it is Day*; that is, because a fit Season and Opportunity is vouchsafed and allowed us, to do this Work in. *A Day*: That is the Time of this present Life, and the Enjoyment of the Means of Grace, outwardly in the Gospel, and inwardly by the Assistance of His Spirit. And let us consider this as a Day;

1. For Quality.

2. For Quantity.

First, For Quality: God called the Light, *DAY*, Gen. 1. 5. The Day is, *Tempus Lucis*, the Time of Light; affording us necessary Help, to see to do our Work. Therefore, the Day is appointed for Labour, because 'tis a fit time for it; *Psal.* 104. 22, 23. *The Sun ariseth: Man goeth forth unto his Work, unto his Labour, until the Evening. If any Man walk in the Day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the Light of this World: But if a Man walk in the Night, he stumbleth, because there is no Light in him, St. John* 11. 9, 10.

The Time of this Life, is called *Light*, in Opposition to *Death*, which is a State of *Darkness*; and the Grave, which is the House of *Darkness*; the *Land of Darkness*, as *Job* describes it, *ch.* 10. 21, 22. *Before I go, whence I shall not Return, even to the Land of Darkness, and the Shadow of Death: A Land of Darkness, as Darkness it self, and of the Shadow of Death, without any Order; and where the Light is as Darkness. And Chap.* 18. 18. *He shall be driven from Light into Darkness, and chased out of the World. Once more,*

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Chap. 33. 28, 30. *He will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and his Life shall see the Light: To bring back his Soul from the Pit, to be enlightned with the Light of the Living.*

And the *Season of Grace* is call'd a *Day*, from the *Similitude* of the *Fitness* of a *Natural Day*, for the *Works* of this *World*; and of the *Day of Grace*, for the *Works* of the *World to come*: and from the *Likeness* of the *Causes*, of either of them. The *Rising* of the *Sun*, and its *Presence*, makes *Day*; and nothing but the *Sun* can make it: not the *Moon*, or *Stars*, in their greatest *Brightness*. So the *Son of Righteousness*, as *Christ* is called, *Mal. 4. 2.* arising and shining, in the *Beams* of the *Gospel*, can only make this *Spiritual Day*. 'Tis not the *Twy-light* of *Nature*, nor the *Glow-Worm-light* of *Arts*, and *Humane Learning*; nor the *Moon-light* of the *Law*; but the *Sun-light* of the *Gospel*, that produceth it. *Christ is the true Light*, *Joh. 1. 9.* And in the next *Verse* after the *Text*, he saith, *I am the Light of the World.* See also *St. John 8. 12.* And in *Old Simeon's Song*, *St. Luke 2. 32.* *A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy People Israel.*

And

And therefore, before *Christ's* Coming, the World was over-whelmed with Darkness: But, as the Prophet *Isaiah* had long before fore-told, upon His Appearing, *The People which sat in Darkness, and the Shadow of Death, saw great Light spring up,* Matth. 4. 16.

Therefore *Zachary* sung at the the Birth of his Son *St. John Baptist*; *Thou Child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: For thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord, to prepare His Wayes; to give Knowledge of Salvation unto His People, by the Remission of their Sins, through the tender Mercies of our God, (which Words are an Excellent Description of the Gospel) whereby the Day-spring from on High hath visited us; to give Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death; to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace,* St. Luk. 1. 76, 77, 78, 79.

Now, the Presence of the Day layes a great Engagement upon us to be working. *Solomon* enforceth that Exhortation, Eccles. 12. 1, 2. *Remember now thy Creator in the Dayes of thy Youth; by this Argument, While the Sun, or the Light be not darkened: While the Vigour of thy Senses, and thy Reason last, and thy Life is spared to thee. And you may see*

the same Reason improved by St. Paul, with Respect to the Day of Grace, Rom. 13. 12, 13. *The Night is far spent, the Day is at hand: Let us therefore put off the Works of Darkness, let us put on the Armour of Light: Let us walk Honestly, as in the Day.* And Eph. 5. 8. *Ye were sometimes Darkness, but now are ye Light in the Lord: Walk as Children of Light, and have no Fellowship with the Unfruitful Works of Darkness.* And again: 1 Thes. 5. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Ye are all Children of the Light, and of the Day: We are not of the Night, nor of the Darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober: For they that sleep, sleep in the Night; and they that are drunken, are drunken in the Night. But let us who are of the Day, be sober, putting on the Breast-plate of Faith and Love; and for an Helmet, the Hope of Salvation.*

If a Man have Haste of Business, he'll Wake and Rise before the Sun, as David, Psal. 119. 147, 148. *I prevented the Dawning of the Morning, and cried; Mine Eyes prevent the Night-Watches: At Mid-night will I Rise; or eke out the Day by Candle-Light.* The good House-Wife's Candle goes not out by Night, Prov.

31. 15, 18. But admit it be excusable to sleep by Night, and God may wink at the Closing of our Eyes, while Darknes covers us, (the Time of that Ignorance God winked at, Act. 17. 30.) yet 'tis Intollerable to do so, when the Sun shines in its full Strength.

Now, he calleth all Men, every where to Repent. Where-ever the Light of the Gospel shines, to shew how much they need it, 'tis (as we use to say) a burning Shame to burn Day-light: And we cannot upbraid a Sluggard more smartly, than by drawing open his Curtains, and letting in the Sun upon him; and demanding, *What think'st thou? Did God Almighty make that glorious Light to sleep by?*

Secondly, A day for Quantity } Extension,
and that both in } Limitation,

First, A day Extensively: A whole day, not a Minute, not an Hour. The Lord affords you sufficient time, to do the Work he hath set you; and expects from you: A Day is a fair Proportion for a Dayes Work; and this Allowance of Convenient Time, will leave Sinners very inexcusable, and greatly aggravates

the not Fulfilling what's required of them. Rom. 10. 21. *All day long have I stretch- ed out my Hands to a disobedient; and gain-saying People.* St. Matth. 20. 6. *Why stand ye here all the day Idle.* It heightened God's Wrath against Jezebel, that He gave her space to Repent of her Fornication, and she Repented not, Rev. 2. 21. *The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to Repentance,* 2. Pet. 3. 9. And we should Account this Long-suffering, Salvation, a great Opportunity to promote our Salvation. And this Goodness, Forbearance, and Long-suffering of God, should not be despised, nor securely trifled away; but should lead us to Repentance (Rom. 2. 4.) speedily and quickly: And the rather, because, though God waits to be gracious, He will not wait alwayes; and though He strive long, and knock often, He will cease both to strive and knock, when He finds it is in vain: And though He allow you a whole day; yet, by way of Limita- tion,

Secondly, 'Tis but a day; and that word carries its Limits with it. A day is *Pars Temporis mensurata*, a measured stated Portion of Time. Are there not Twelve Hours in a day? Joh. 11. 9. He saith not

a Month, a Year, an Age; lest we should be encouraged and emboldned to Security: But a Day. And He often puts us in mind of this: Heb. 3. 13. *Exhort one another dayly, while it is called to Day.* Vers. 15. *Whilst it is said to Day, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your Hearts.* And more expressly, Chap. 4. 7. *Again, He limiteth a certain Day, saying in David; To day, after so long a Time as it is said to Day, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your Hearts.* Call'd the Day of this or that Man. *Oh, that thou hadst known, at least, in this thy Day, the Things which belong unto thy Peace,* Luk. 19. 42. And the Day of Visitation, Vers. 44. and 1 Pet. 2. 12. And this Day may be shortned: There are *Winter-dayes*, and *Dies dimidiati*, Dayes cut off in the midst; when the *Sun* goes down at Noon-day, as is threatned, *Amos* 8. 9. And we find most frequent Instances of it, in them who Live not out half their Dayes, as is threatned against some, and fulfilled upon many; who are cut short, in the Noon, in the Morning, in the Dawn of their Dayes. There are short Graves good store in every Church-Yard: And the Arabian Proverb saith, *The Old Camel carries the Young Camel's Skn to the Market.*

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Nay, 'tis abbreviated, and shrunk up into a Moment, a *punctum Temporis*. Now, *Now is the Accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2.

This is the *Second Reason*, *A Day to Work in, and but a Day*; therefore, be speedy and diligent, lest you be prevented, lest you be surprized and benighted. For,

Thirdly, The Night cometh, wherein no Man can Work: That is Death, at the farthest; which will cut us off from all Opportunities, and Possibilities, of farther working; and disposeth of every Man, according to the State in which it finds him: as is figuratively express'd by that of Solomon, Eccles. 11. 3. *If the Tree fall toward the South, or toward the North; in the Place where the Tree falleth, there it shall be*. As the Man is fit to go to Heaven, or to Hell, when he Dyeth; so he must continue unalterably for ever. Or,

2. This [*Night*] may signify the Setting of the *Sun of Righteousness*, the Removal of the Gospel, the Taking away God's Kingdom, or Candlestick, put of its place; and leaving us in a dismal *Night* of Ignorance, Error, Idolatry, destitute of that true Light, which alone can
guide

guide our Feet into the Way of Salvation. Or,

3. That woeful Night of God's Departure, and giving us up to our own Heart's Lusts, to fill up the Measure of our Iniquities, for grieving, resisting, quenching of *his Spirit*. And though God neither take us out of the World, nor take away the Means of Grace from the Places we live in: Yet, if he take *his Spirit*, *his Blessing*, *his Grace* away from the Means, it will be a *Woeful Night* indeed: For He saith, *Woe be unto them, when I depart from them*, Hos. 9. 12. We can neither have Heart to work, nor Success in working in so dark a *Night*.

But this Consideration, That *Night* hastens to over-take us, should quicken us to work, because *Night* is

1. *A Reckoning Time.*

2. *A Resting Time.*

First, A Reckoning Time. If no Account were to be given of the Loss, or Improvement of our Time, our Lloytering might be more excusable; at least, because it would be less Dangerous, although it were not less Sinful: But every Man must give an Account of himself, and

and of his Work, to God, Rom. 14. 12. And *Night* is the time, when we shall be call'd to that Account. Your Servants have the *Day* to do your Work, and at *Night* you take an Account of them, how they have done your Work in the *Day*. St. Matth. 20. 8. *When Even was come, the Lord of the Vineyard saith unto his Steward, Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire.* Our Lord will certainly come, and take an Account of His Servants, for His Talents committed to them: Matth. 25. 19. *After a long time, the Lord of those Servants cometh, and Reckoneth with them:* And then, Woe be to the Sloathful Servant: Vers. 25,--30. *Cast ye the Unprofitable Servant into utter Darkness.* He shall have *Night* enough, even the Horror of *Eternal Night*; who had turn'd his *Day* of Working, into a *Night* of lazy Sleeping. Judgment follows Death: *'Tis appointed to all Men once to Dye, and after that the Judgment,* Heb. 9. 29. *I beheld a Pale Horse; and his Name that sat on him, was Death, and Hell followed with him,* Rev. 6. 8.

Secondly, Night is Resting Time. The Day is for Labour, the Night for Rest. Man goeth forth unto his Work, unto his Labour,

*Labour, until the Evening, Psal. 104. 24.
But till the Evening.*

*Night is Rest- } In Mercy to Labourers.
ing Time, } In Justice to Loiterers.*

The *First* may cease their *Labour*, and have no further *Toyl* in *VWorking*: The *Latter* must cease, and have no further *Opportunity*, to Finish their *VWork*,

First, Night is Resting Time in Mercy to them, who have Laboured faithfully in the Day: They shall not be alwayes toying, and wearying, and wearying out themselves with hard Labour: But when Night comes, They shall rest from their Labours, and their Works shall follow them, Rev. 14. 13. There remaineth a Rest for the People of God, Heb. 4. 9. After an hot and scorching Day, there shall come a cool refreshing Evening. They that have born the Heat and Burden of the Day, Shall have a Time of Refreshing come from the Presence of the Lord, when He shall send Jesus Christ, Act. 3. 19, 20. And They shall rest in their Beds, and enter into Peace, who have walked in their Uprightness, Isa. 57. 2. As God will not suffer them to be Tempted above their Strength; so not to be wrought beyond it. Hold

Hold out therefore, Christians, faint not; Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Let him that is Righteous, be Righteous still; and let him that is Holy, be Holy still. And mark the Incouragement Christ backs this Exhortation with: Behold, I come quickly; and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man as his Works shall be, Rev. 22. 12. And to put it out of doubt, he adds, Surely, I come quickly: As if He should say, 'Tis but a little while, a little longer, and your Tronble is over, your Work is done for ever.

Christ takes notice of all your Labours in his Service, and all your Persecutions, and Reproaches, and Slanders, with which proud, formal, or prophane Men, will load and oppress you; if you be sincere and faithful to Him: And He will ere long set you out of their reach, and the Devil's too. 'Tis worth observing, that all the Epistles to the Seven Churches begin thus; I know thy Works, Rev. 2. 2, 9, 13, 19. 3. 1, 8, 15. And such Additions follow: Thy Labour, thy Patience, thy Tribulation, thy Dwelling where Satan's Seat is; thy Service, thy Faith, thy Charity. And bids them Hold fast, and be Faithful to the Death, and He will give them

them a Crown of Life; and tells them, He will come quickly. Is Israel oppressed, and shall not God take Notice of it? See Exod. 3. 7. *I have surely seen the Affliction of my People, and have heard their Cry, by reason of their Task-Masters; for I know their Sorrows.*

God's Israel shall not be alwayes in the Egyptian Furnace, nor in the Howling Wilderness; but He hath a Canaan for them, a Promised Land on the other side of Jordan, of Death. When the Disciples are toying by reason of contrary Winds, and the Ship is tossed, (Corruptions and Temptations are full in their Faces, as they sail Heaven-ward) Christ will come to them, and they shall have a Calm; and the Ship will be presently at the Land, whither it was going: *For the Oppression of the Poor, for the Sighing of the Needy, I will now (now presently) arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in Safety, from him that puffeth at him, Psal. 12. 5.* You heard before, that Work implies Difficulty: It cannot be denyed, but there is some Hardness in the Work of Religion: 'Tis call'd Labour of Love. There is Labour, though Love sweeten it, and ease it. *The Flesh is weak, even where the Spirit is willing.* Our Life of Christianity,

nity, is a Warfare; and such as admits neither Peace nor Truce; but constant, either Watching or Fighting, against most dangerous Enemies; being so subtle, so malicious, so powerful, so restless. And God will not hold us alwayes to such hard Service: But the Time is hastning, when He will say, Thy Warfare is accomplished; and as He saith, *He will not contend for ever; for the Spirit would fast, and the Souls which he hath made*, Isa. 57. 16. so He will put a Period to all their labours, sorrows, and wrestlings; at farthest, Death will bring thee thy *Quietus*, a Writ of Ease; and when Night comes, (and it hastens apace) thou may'st lay thee down in Peace, and take thy Rest; for thy God hath made thy Bed for thee; and He will make thee dwell in Everlasting Safety.

Cast not away therefore your Confidence, which hath great Recompence of Reward; for ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promise: For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Heb, 10. 35, 36, 37. And when He comes, He will not come empty-handed: And Be not weary in well-doing; for in due time ye shall Reap, if ye faint not.

not. And as *Jos ph* said after his Advancement, *God hath made me forget all my Toyl, and my Father's House, Gen. 41. 51.* so when the approaching *Night* overtakes thee, and thou shalt be gathered to *Abraham's Bosom*, and Sleep in *Jesus*; not so much as a frightful Dream shall interrupt thy Repose, or disturb the Satisfaction of thy everlasting Rest. Let the Fore-sight and Belief of this, quicken thy Industry, while the Day continues. And remember that of *Solomon, Eccles. 5. 12. The Sleep of a Labouring Man is sweet.* If thou hast done, if thou hast lov'd the Work of God in the Day; He will not only give thee the Sleep of his Beloved at Night; but the harder thou hast wrought, and the more thou hast been weary'd at it, the more welcome, the sounder, and the sweeter will thy Rest be.

Secondly, Night is Resting Time (that is, a Time when they shall have no farther Opportunity to finish their Work) *in Justice to the Loyerers. Then Time shall be no more, Rev. 10. 6.*

Now, that *Night* above described; of Death, of the Setting of the Gospel-Sun, or God's Departure from a Soul, / for what

what follows will respect sometimes one, sometimes another of them) will put a Period to their Working, upon a seven-fold Account.

First, By reason of its Darkness, in which they cannot see to work. *He call'd the Darkness, Night*, Gen. 1. 5. *The Sun went down, and it was Dark*, Gen. 15. 17. You know this to be so by Experience, in every Revolution of the Natural Day. Darkness is nothing but Privation of Light; and when Light is withdrawn, Darkness must needs follow. When the Evening is shut in, the Black and Dark Night (as *Solomon* calls it) succeeds presently; spreading its sable Wings over the whole Hemisphere: So that, Men can neither see their Way to guide their Feet, nor their Work to guide their Hands.

No Phrases or Expressions of Speech, are more common than these; *The Way of the Lord, The Path of Life, Walking with God, Coming to Christ, Going to Heaven*; and such like implying Motion.

Now, How can any of these be done in the Darkness of the Night? How shall we keep the Right Path, that is so beset with so many By-ways on every side?

By-

By-ways of Errour on one hand, and By-ways of Wickedness on the other, if we have no Light to guide us? In Reference to this, is that Passage of our Saviour: *Walk while ye have Light, lest Darknes come upon you: For he that walketh in Darknes, knoweth not whither he goeth*, St. John 12. 35. *Because Darknes hath blinded his Eyes*, 1 Joh. 2. 11.

And as there is great danger of losing, and turning out of the Right Way; so there is no less of stumbling and falling in it, if we have not Light to shew us the Stumbling-blocks and Snares, the Devil and his Instruments lay in our way, that we may avoyd them. *If a Man walk in the Night, he stumbleth, because there is no Light in him*, Joh. 11. 10.

And we need the Light no less to guide our Hands in Working, than our Feet in Walking. Who, but a Fool or Mad-man, would attempt any curious Work in the Dark? To Paint, to Carve, to make a Clock or Watch, or but to write a Letter? Now, the Work we have to do for God, and our Souls, beyond all peradventure, requires the clearest Light, to see to do it well. How can we believe, repent, obey, or try these Graces by the Law or Gospel, when we cannot see

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see the Rule by which they should be measured. While *Christ* the Son of Righteousness shines in his Ordinances, and by his Spirit, there is a Day; and you may see to work the Work *God* sets you: But when that departs, you are presently be-nighted, and cannot take one Step, or draw one Line aright. The Natural Sun only enlightens the *Medium*, & discovers the Object; but infuseth not a Vivifying Power into the Eye. It opens not the Eyes, it makes not blind Men see: Though it makes things visible to them that can see, yet makes Night by setting. But this Sun makes Day in an extraordinary manner, it gives Light and Sight both. When *St. Paul* was call'd and sent to Preach the Gospel, his Commission ran thus: *I send thee to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light*, Act. 26. 18.

How dismal a Night must therefore follow, when this Sun is set, which leaves Men both Blind, and in the Dark? That Light which discovers what our Works are, can only direct how they may become such as they ought to be. John 3. 21. *He that doth Truth, cometh to the Light; that his Deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* And
it

it must be by that Light, we must see to do God's Work. Improve it therefore, while you have it, before the *Night*, the time of Darkness overtake, yea overwhelm, you.

Secondly, No Man can work in this *Night*, because 'tis incapable of any Light. When the Natural Light of this World leaves us, and Night draws the Curtains of Darkness round about our Habitations, and the whole Space 'twixt Heaven and Earth, is nothing but Obscurity, we can relieve our selves with the *Artificial* Lights of Candles, Lamps, or Torches: But this *Night* resists such Remedies, and is Incurable. 'Tis gross Darkness, like *Egyptian Darkness*, which might be felt, but not removed; too thick for the faint Beams of any Candle to pierce through, disperse, or scatter. If you lose, and loyter out your Day, you cannot redeem your Error, or eke out your Working time by the borrowed Light of Art. As in the *New-Jerusalem* there needs no Candle, Rev. 22. 5. so in the utter Darkness, (which seizeth on all, without that Blessed Place of Light) no Candle is allowed, or would do any Good. *The Candle of the Wicked shall be put out*, Prov. 24. 20.

20. 'Tis observable, God calls His Ministers *Lights*. *Ye are the Light of the World*, Matth. 5. 14. *John was a Burning and a Shining Light*, John 5. 35. and the Station of his Gospel-Ordinances a *Candle-stick*, Rev. 1. 12. But Churches, and Ministers, and Ordinances, are only for this Life, there is no use of them hereafter. Christ walks in the midst of them: and when he with-draws they signify nothing. O ye *Loyterers*, think not to make *Candle-Light-Work* of your Eternal Concernments, when the Sun is down. Here the Candle & the Sun shine both together. And when the Sun sets, the Candle is put out for Ever.

You know, I suppose, where the Custom prevails, of multiplying *Tapers*, *Torches*, *Candles*, about the *Herse*s, and upon the *Tombs*, and *Graves* of the Dead; and singing *Masses*, *Dirges*, *Requiem*s for them: and these Last are just as profitable for their Souls, as the First are serviceable to their Eyes, when Death hath clos'd them.

Christians, I beseech you, as you love your Souls, beware of these Cheats, and venture not your *eternal* Estates upon such after-Games, and *Work out your own Salvation, while you live*; and trust not to their

their Superstitious, and Covetous Frauds, who undertake to do it for you when you are Dead.

Thirdly, Men cannot work when *Night* is come, because the *Night* is Unfruitful: If you think to work then, or try to work then, you will most certainly but lose your Labour. I may use the *Apostle's* Expression, at least allusively, *Unfruitful Works of Darknes*, Eph. 5. 11.

If Men should Plow and Sow by *Night*, and no *Day* follow, no Fruit would come of all their Cost and Pains. We need the *Sun*, not only to see to work by; but also to influence our Work: He must warm, and cherish, and ripen all by *his* Heat, as well as direct the doing of it by *his* Light. When *Night* comes, you cannot work to any Purpose or Advantage. Suppose you could cry and knock as earnestly and loud, as did those *Foolish Virgins* at Mid-night, *Matth.* 25. 10. it would prove as useless to you, as it did to them; or those you read of, *Prov.* 1. 28. Then (when this *Night* is upon them) *Then they shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, (as they think, perhaps 'tis spoken Ironically) but they shall not find Me: But they shall eat of the Fruit of their own way,*

way, (Oh bitter Fruit!) and be fill'd with their own Devices, Vers. 31.

And as I touch't before the Folly of those, who trust to the Prayers of others, when they are dead: So let me earnestly admonish and intreat you, not to defer Praying for your selves, 'till you are a Dying. I use the word *Praying* Comprehensively, for Penitential Devotion, and being sincerely Religious. I would not be too severe, but I would be faithful to you; and therefore, I must tell you, I think it extreamly dangerous to defer till then. I know you are ready enough to remember the Old Proverb, *True Repentance is never too Late*; But I beseech you, forget not the Second Part of it, *Late Repentance is seldome True*.

How often have we seen the most earnest Penitential Vows of Men, upon their Sick Beds, grow Weak and Dye; as those who made them grow Strong and Lively?

I would write nothing, but what is most serious upon so weighty a Subject: Yet because many are prone to retain such a Passage, who would forget a graver Sentence, give me Leave, without Offence or Censure, to add the Translation

tion of those Proverbial Verses; which signify, that the very worst of Men are ready to pretend Reformation, when they are Sick; though they never intend it, when they are Well: They were fitted to the Times, in which they were made, when the Name of a *Monk* signified a Devout Man.

The Devil was Sick, the Devil a Monk would be:

The Devil was Well, the Devil a Monk was he.

Trust not your deceitful Hearts, to so deceitful a Time; neither defer your Repentance, till you are so unfit to perform it. But while your Strength is firm, and your Reason sound, and all your Faculties, in their Vigour, set upon this Work, which you'll find hard enough for your best Abilities; lest it prove like Day-Work; attempted in the Night, altogether Fruitless.

Fourthly, You cannot work when this Night comes, because it will strip you of your Furniture and Tools, with which you should perform it. When Morning-Light appears, Men Rise and Dress themselves,
D and

and take their Tools, and go forth unto their Work and Labour: But like that Old Man at *Gibeah*, *Judg. 19. 16.* *They come out of the Field from their Work at Even:* and then they strip themselves, set by their Tools, and go to Bed to take their Rest. While the Day of your Life, and *God's* Grace are continued, you have Talents to trade with, and Tools to work with; but when Night comes, they must be all laid by: Use them therefore while you have them.

Suppose a Man had borrowed of his Neighbour some useful or necessary Instrument, for a Work he is much concerned to finish; or a Scholar a Book, which he is much concerned to Read; but both were lent but for a Day, and must be return'd at Night: How hard would One Labour, how closely would the Other sit to his Study? Concluding thus: I must not Loyer now, for this Work must be done; and I cannot do it without this Instrument; and this is but lent me till Night, and then 'twill be fetch't away. While the Day lasts, *God* furnishes you with Tools fitted to your Work: You have Ministers, you have Bibles, you have Sermons, you have Sacraments, you have all appointed Means of Grace, and you have

have Eyes to read, and Ears to hear, Reason to understand, consider, and judge, Consciences to check you, Affections to excite and quicken you: But when Night comes, all will be taken from you. *Then the Lord will say, Take the Talent from him,* Mat. 25. 28. And if you do not your work while you are furnished with all these Helps, What can you hope to do when all are gone?

Fifthly, No Man can work after this Night is come, because this Work is express'd by entring into a Gate or Door; and *Night* is a Time of shutting Doors. *Josh. 2. 5. About the Time of Shutting the Gate, when it was Dark.* All the Day the Gates of the Cities stand wide open, to afford free Ingress and Egress to all Comers; and the Doors of your Houses stand open, or but upon the Latch, and yield an easy Entrance; but when the Day is shut in, you Lock, and Bolt, and Bar, and make all fast, that none can enter.

Now, there are *Two* Sorts of Gates, or Doors, which must be entered before the *Sun* set, and they be shut.

1. *God's Gate, into which Man must enter.*

2. *Man's Door, into which God must enter.*

First, God's Gate. Open to me the Gates of Righteousness. This is the Lord's Gate, Into which the Righteous shall enter, Psal. 118. 20. Enter in at the Streight-Gate, Matth. 7. 13. Now, God's Gate stands open all the Day: But at Night, the Door is shut, as the Foolish Virgins found to their Shame and Sorrow, St. Matth. 25. 10.

God hath Four Gates, which stand open to Returning Sinners all Day long; but shall be all shut up at Night: The Gates of Grace, of Mercy, of Hope, of Glory.

First, The Gate of Grace. Grace is God's Free Favour, that Perfection of the Divine Nature, which inclines Him to do Good to Men, without any External Motive of His own Accord. This Gate stands open all the Day. God waits to be gracious, and stretches out his Hand all the Day long, to invite, to plead with Sinners, and to beseech them to accept His Grace and Favour: But if they despise His Goodness, and will not be perswaded to come in, He will cast off for ever, and be favourable no more: He will even forget to be Gracious, and in Anger shut up His tender

tender Mercies. For so I find the Psalmist expressing his Fear of this Doom, *Psalm* 77. 79.

Secondly, The Gate of Mercy. Mercy is that Attribute of God, by which His tender Compassions are stirred up, to pity His Creatures in their Misery, and (as it were) to sympathize with them; to be afflicted in all their Afflictions.

This Gate stands also open all the Day; and it even grieves Him to His Heart, to see the Misery Men hasten towards, by their Sin and Folly: And He warns and calls them most pathetically; *Turn ye, turn ye; Why will ye Dye? Ezek. 33. 11.* And is in a Merciful Contest with Himself, as you may read *Hos. 11. 8.* *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My Heart is turned within Me, My Repentings are kindled together: And resolves, that as yet, He will not execute the Fierceness of His Anger; nor as yet, Return to Destroy them; because He is God, and not Man.*

But if all His Weeping over them will not make them Mourn, if all His Repenting Compassions will not melt them; Their Hardyneſs will harden Him, be-

cause His Softness did not soften them ; and His Mercy will be turn'd into Fury : and in the Spring-Tyde of their Misery, his Mercy will be in the Lowest Ebb. And instead of weeping any more over them, *He will Laugh at their Calamity, and Mock when their Fear cometh*, Prov. 1. 26. And His Mercy will be clean gone for evermore : And though this Gate stood open to them till they Dyed ; yet He will not shew these Wonders of Mercy to the Dead ; the Dead shall not arise to have, and praise him for them. *His loving Kindness shall not be declared in the Grave, nor His Faithfulness in Destruction. His Wonders shall not be known in the Dark, nor His Compassions in the Land of Forgetfulness*, Psal. 88. 10, 11, 12.

Oh therefore, follow not after Lying Vanities, to the forsaking of your own Mercies ! But while this Gate stands open, fly into it, as the Man-slayer would into the City of Refuge, before God shut it up, and shut out you (as certainly He will, when *Night* is come) and you be left to the Cruel Mercies of that Avenger of Blood, that Eternal Misery, which presses after you so fast, so close, so hard.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The Gate of Hope: This stands open all the Day. While Men live and enjoy the Means of Grace, there remains *Hope*, that they may obtain *God's Favour*, and escape His Wrath. The Common Proverb is true in this Sence, *That while there's Life there's Hope;* as *Solomon* tells us, *To him that is joyned to all the Living, there is Hope, Eccles. 9. 4.* We meet with this Expression in *Hos. 2. 15.* *I will give her the Valley of Achor, for a Door of Hope:* Which may admit these Interpretations amongst others; Either that the Possession of this Valley, being part of the Promis'd Land, was as an Earnest, and an Argument to *hope*, they should possess the Whole: Or, that *Achan* being now stoned, and the accursed Thing removed, there was *Hope*, that *God* would again be with them, and drive out their Enemies before them. So the Continuance of Day is a Door of *Hope*, that He who hath given the Means of Grace, will also give His Grace, yea, and Glory, at the last; and that He who spares our Lives after they have been forfeited, may remit the Forfeiture, that we may not Dye eternally.

And indeed, it is the right Use of This, that upholds *Goa's* People, in all their

Streights and Fears: In their Affliction and Misery, while they feed on Gall and Wormwood, they recall to mind, that *God's* Compassions fail not: *And because, through the Lord's Mercies, they are not Consumed;* therefore have they Hope, *Lam. 3. 20, 21, 22.* And 'tis the Abuse of *this*, which holds up Wicked Men against the Gripes, the Nippings and Warnings of their own Hearts, those secret unseen Lashes, and Wounds of their own Consciences, are so frequently inflicting: They know, *God* is Merciful, and *Christ* dyed for Sinners; and they *hope*, they may yet Repent, and be Happy, and partake of all this. And this keeps their Hearts from breaking with Horror, and succumbing under a Load, which is truly insupportable. But when *Night* comes, this Door shall be shut so close, no Beam of *Hope* will dart in, so much as at the Key-hole. But all their *Hope* will vanish and perish; and be as the Spider's Webb, and giving up the Ghost: Their *Hope* shall be cut off for ever, and the dreadful Terrors of Everlasting Despair shall seize upon them, and multiply their Sorrows; their Condition being as hopeless, and helpless, in their own Apprehensions: and Misery shall come upon them in its Perfection, because

because no *Hope* remains of ever escaping. And this is the most inveterate Sting of the never-dying Worm; and that which makes the Pit of Hell to be, what it is so truly called, *Bottomless*.

*Fourthly, The Gate of Glory; That stands open too, till Night: That is, the Kingdom of Heaven, in the highest Sense! The Place, in which God most fully and openly Communicates Himself to Saints and Angels; and bestows the Compleatest Happiness, the Reasonable Nature can be capable of; into which, who ever come, shall never sin nor sorrow more: but be made perfect in Holiness and Happiness, by the clearest Vision, and most intimate Fruition of God Blessed for ever. But at Night, a Door shall be shut, to keep all those for ever out, who were not ready to go in with the Bridegroom, into the Marriage, *Matth. 25. 10.**

In David's Language, They shall never see Light, they shall never Inhabit God's Holy Hill: In St. Paul's, They shall not Inherit the Kingdom of God: In St. Peter's, They shall have no Entrance administered into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; nor attain the Sal-

vation of their Souls. In St. John's, *They shall in no wise enter into the New-Jerusalem. In our Saviour's, They shall never see the Face of God in Heaven; nor be with Him, to Behold His Glory; nor Follow the Lamb upon Mount Zion; nor Drink of the Rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's Right Hand: Nor be fill'd with those Joyes, which are at His Right Hand, for evermore.*

Hasten therefore, while these *Gates* are open: And as Men, who are Journeying to a City, where at Even the Bridge is drawn, and the Gates are shut, and the Keys are carryed to the Governour, will be sure to come before that Hour; lest they be exposed to the Enemy, or to the Coldness and Darknes of the *Night*, without either safe Shelter, or convenient Lodging: So let these Considerations quicken you, lest you be be-nighted, and find too soon the Folly of your coming too late, ~~to~~ enter into the City of God.

But Man hath a *Door* too, into which God must enter; and this will be shut at *Night*. Rev. 3. 20. *Behold, I stand at the Door, and Knock; if any Man open to Me, I will come in, and Sup with him, and be with Me.*

There

There is a *Door of Knowledge*: The Key of *Knowledge* Opens it. When the Eyes of our Understandings are enlightened, opened, to know God in Christ; and to receive the Knowledge of His Will. God comes into the Heart through this *Door*, when the Eyes of our Minds are so opened, as to know God and Christ aright; so as to *Know them*, is *Eternal Life*, Joh. 17. 3.

And a *Door of Faith*, through which Christ comes, when He enters to dwell in our Hearts by *Faith*, Ephes. 3. 17.

And there is a *Door of Repentance*, by which Sin is turn'd out, and God is admitted into our Souls.

And, *Lastly*, There is the *Door of Holy Affections*, *Love*, *Desire*, *Delight* in God. These are (at least) the *Hinges*, upon which the *Door* of our *Hearts* turn.

Now, these *Doors* may all be opened to let in God, while the *Day* lasts; and He will come in, and make His Abode with us: John 14. 23. Jesus said, *If any Man love Me, he will keep My Words: And My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our Abode with him: But when Night comes, they will be shut for ever.*

Hasten

Hasten therefore to open them while you may ; lest when you would, it prove too hard for you, and be above both your Skill, and your Power. You know, a *Door* that is opened dayly, opens easily : But *Doors*, which stand long shut, 'tis hard to make them stir, or open them, without great Violence, that shakes them, and even breaks them in pieces : The Timber will swell, the Hinges will rust, the Wards of the Lock will be cankered, and the Bolts will even grow into the Staples : And so will it, by Proportion, be with your Hearts, if you keep the *Door* long shut against God. Nay, He may in Anger clap on a *Padlock* on the other side, shut thee up Judicially in Unbelief, and Impenitency ; nail and barricado up the *Door* for ever ; because He knock't and call'd so long, and woo'd so earnestly in vain. Cant. 5. 2. *Open to Me My Sister, My Love, My Dove, My Undeiled ; for My Head is fill'd with Dew, and My Locks with the Drops of the Night.* Then after many idle Excuses for her Delay, Vers. 6. *I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had with-drawn Himself, and was gone : My Soul failed, when He spake. I sought Him, but I could not find Him ; I called Him, but He gave me no Answer.*

Take

Take heed, lest *this* (or worse) be thy Case: Refuse not to open at the first Knock, the first Call, the Motions of His Spirit, the Checks of thy Conscience, the Admonitions of the Word; lest He Knock no more, or refuse when thou shalt open at thy own Leasure, to come near the Door. The Servants which shall be blessed, are *They that wait for their Lord; and when he cometh and knocketh, open to him immediately, Luk. 12. 35.*

Rouze up your selves therefore, and speak to your Souls in *David's* Language, and as much as may be with *David's* Zeal, *Psal. 24. 7, 9.* which he witnessed by the Ingemination of them; *Lift up your Heads, Oh ye Gates; and be ye lift up, ye Everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is this King of Glory.* And take heed that dreadful Place be not fulfilled upon you; *Isa. 6. 10.* (the most dreadful Word God can speak, till he say, *Depart ye Cursed*) *Make the Heart of this People fat, and their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes; lest they be Converted, and I Heal them.* A Place Six times repeated in the New-Testament, to make us mind it; lest by our sinful Shutting the Door, we provoke

voke God Judicially to shut it up for ever.

Sixthly, No Man can work when this Night cometh, because 'tis an abiding Night: There is no Day on the other side of it. We say, *To Morrow is a New Day*; what we cannot do to Day, we may do to Morrow: But there is no Morrow beyond the Night of Death. 'Tis appointed to all Men once to Dye, (but once) and after that the Judgment, Heb. 9. 29. No Second Day of Life allowed to them, who have mis-spent and lost the First.

Job said long since: *There is Hope of a Tree*, that if it be cut down, it will sprout again; and that the tender Branch thereof will not cease: Though the Root thereof wax old in the ground, and the Stock thereof Dye; yet through the Scent of Water, it will bud, and bring forth Boughs like a Plant.

But Man dyeth and wasteth away; yea, Man giveth up the Ghost, and, Where is he? As the Waters fail from the Sea, and the Flood decayeth and dryeth up; so Man Lyeth down, and Riseth not till the Heavens be no more. They shall not awake, or rise out of their Sleep, Job 14. 7.--12. And the Heathen Poet long ago observed the

the like of the *Sun*. The *Sun's* Set and Rise, Set and Rise again: But *We*, when *We* Set, are covered with *Eternal Night*. No repeated Light or Day succeeds.

O therefore, timely and wisely Improve the Present! That had need be done well, which can be done but once; and admits no doing it again, to remedy the Errours of doing ill at first: And such, above all things, is the Work of *Dying*, and finishing our *Dayes* Work, before the *Night* surprize us. The *Proverb* tells us, *Three Things require greatest Caution, and most prudent Circumspection, Marriage, Battle, Death*: Upon this Account, *Because their Consequents are like to last*. Yet the *First* of these excludes not all possible Relief. Good Counsel may reclaim, Patience may bear, and Wisdom may improve the Inconvenience, or the Death of the Party, which makes the Yoke unequal and uneasy, may take it off the Grieved Party's Neck, that it shall not alwayes gall here: And at farthest, *Death* will Dissolve the Bond, that it shall not be alwayes troublesome.

And the *Second*, though dangerous, is not wholly desperate: He that hath lost a Battle, suffer'd a Defeat and Rout, may Rally and Recruit; and though it
cost

cost him Dear, may learn Experience for more wary Conduct, and may expect a more Propitious Fortune. But he that *Dyes* Unpardoned and Ungodly, that is, before his *Work* is done, he is undone to all Intents and Purposes; no Remedy, or Hope of Remedy, remains to all Eternity.

And as the fore-nam'd Reasons shew it impossible to Work when this *Night* hath actually overtaken us; so the *Last* which follows, should excite and quicken us, to the uttermost, to be before-hand with it. For,

Seventhly, This *Night* makes' hast. The *Text* tells you, *It cometh*; and I tell you, and Experience tells you, and *Christ* (in effect) tells you, *It comes apace, it comes quickly*.

Time is painted with long Wings; and no Wings are pruned for so swift a flight: It flows like a *Torrent*, and sweeps us away with it: There's no stemming this *Tyde*. And 'tis as Uncertain, as 'tis Swift: Thy *Pulse* beats incessantly, and thy *Breath* is puffing out, and drawing in each Moment; and thou knowest not, that the *One* shall repeat its Stroaks; or the *Other*, be Restored thee once more.

This

This *Night* comes, like a *Thief* in the *Night*: When we lye still and sleep, that wakes, and is in perpetual Motion.

And this may suffice for the Proof of this Observation:

That the Consideration of the Work we have to do, and the Time allowed and limited for the Doing of it, should engage us to the Utmost Diligence, and Speed, in doing of it.

I now proceed to the *Useful Improvement* of this Weighty Truth, with equal Plainness.

And if the Work we have to do, and the Season allowed and limited for the doing of it in, engage us to such Diligence and Speed in the doing of it. This serves,

1. To *Justify* those, who act according to these Engagements.
2. To *Condemn* those, who neglect them, or act contrary to them.
3. To *Exhort* and *Excite* us all, to act suitably to them, by shewing all Diligence and Speed, about our Great Work.

First,

First, This Justifies the Wisdom and Zeal of those, who Live up to, and act according to these Engagements. And I wish to God, the Number were Greater, that deserves such Encouragement. But because they are so few, therefore do they need it the more: For Good Company confirms Good Resolutions; and when many walk together, they embolden each other, and mutually strengthen one anothers Hands and Hearts. But the Narrow-Way, which leads to the Straight-Gate, being found and trodden by so few; and they meeting with so much Opposition, to stop them in it, or divert them out of it, do greatly need all the Encouragements that can be given them: For Prophane, Ungodly Men hate them, and Proud and Formal Pharisees despise them, and reproach them: And all that are so busy in doing the Work of another Master, are mad against them for their Diligence about their Master's, and their Father's Business. He that departeth from Evil, maketh himself a Prey, Isa. 59. 15. God's Heritage is a Speckled Bird; the Birds about her, are against her, Jer. 12. 9.

The Law of Enmity betwixt the Two Seeds, is more unalterable, than the Laws of

of *Medes and Persians*. It discovered it self betimes, in *Cain and Abel*, in *Ishmael and Isaac*; the *Two signal Types* of the *Two Visible kinds of Persecution*, which have prevailed in the *World ever since*; by the *Mouth of the Sword*, or the *Sword of the Mouth*.

Cain, who was of that Wicked One, slew his Brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own Works were Evil, and his Brothers Righteous, 1 Joh. 3. 12. And Ishmael Mocked, Gen. 21. 9. which in St. Paul's Language, is, He that was Born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was Born after the Spirit, Gal. 4. 29. And as the Apostle added, for the time in which he wrote, as it was then, so is it now. So may we, for the times in which we Live; and so will they have cause to do, who shall Live after us. For the Rule, 2 Tim. 3. 12. All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution, is as Universal for Ages and Places, as Persons; no Temporary one, to expire like an Antiquated Law, but will last while this Evil World lasts; and they shall find it, in one kind or the other. And where the Laws pinion the Hands of Cain, the Tongue of Ishmael will be Lawless; and where they dare not kill their Bodies, their
Throats

Throats (*those open Sepulchres*) will swallow them alive, like the Grave; and with Black Mouths, full of *Lyon's Teeth*, will rend their Names, and tear their Reputations, till they wound their very Souls. If a Volly of Lyes, or a Shower of those invenom'd Arrows, bitter, railing, and opprobrious Words, will stop you in, or fright you from your Work. The Father of Lyes hath more Tongues, than *Argus* had Eyes, or *Briarius* had Hands; and will find *Monstrous* Heads enough, both whose Ears grow upon one side.

But let none of these Things move you; neither count your Lives, nor your Names dear to you; so that you may Finish your Course with Joy; Act. 20. 24.

St. James urges to Patience thrice in a Breath, with one of the Arguments in our Text. Jam. 5. 7, 8, 9. *Be patient, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord. Be patient, stablish your Hearts; the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not, behold the Judge standeth at the Door.*

Gratify not the Devil, or his Instruments, so much as to grow Remiss at your Work, for fear of their Reproaches: But keep on your Way; though the
Dogs

Dogs bark, thou'lt soon be past them, and out of the Noise. It would be a dear *Purchase*, to buy their Silence at the Price of abating thy *Zeal* for God. St. *Peter* teaches you a safer and better Way to do it; even by *Well-doing*, and by a good *Conversation* in Christ, to make them ashamed to speak Evil of you. This is the most Innocent *Revenge* you can take on them; to resolve, the more they deride you, or reproach you for your Work, the more earnestly to mind it, and to follow it the more diligently. And 'tis the best Security for your selves, to prevent being disturbed: He that minds his Business intently, hath no Ears to hear, nor Leisure to take notice of, what is design'd to interrupt him. Convince them, you are led by a better *Spirit*, by being able to bear with Meekness, their loudest Slanders, & most spiteful Reproaches. While they cannot bear the Silent, and undesigned Reprehension, your Diligence and *Zeal* reflects upon their Sloath & Trifling, in the Work of God, and their own Souls.

'Tis an Immutable, and Eternal Truth; that the glorifying God, and saving our own Souls, is our Supream Concern, and deserves our *First* and *Highest* Care; and

and who ever acts according to it, shall in spite of Men and Devils, be justified, as a Wise and good Man, in so doing. And their Master's *Euge*, *Well done good and faithful Servant!* enter thou into thy Master's Joy, will put it out of doubt, and controversy for ever. And *Wisdom* shall be justified of her Children; though Fools condemn, and the Sons of *Belial* Blaspheme both the Mother, and her Off-spring.

He that hath *Truth* on his side, and *Reason* on his side, and a well-guided *Conscience* on his side, hath *God* Himself on his side; and need not trouble himself, who, or what-ever is against him. And thus 'tis certainly with every one, who makes *Religion* his Business in good Earnest. And even the Men, whose Mouths Reproach you, in their Hearts must Reverence you: And their Consciences will approve, what the Interest of their Lusts provokes them to condemn in others, that they might escape, being condemned of themselves.

Be not discouraged therefore; but take Heart: Remember He that said, *In the World you shall have Trouble*; said in the same Breath, *Be ye of good Cheer, I have Over-come the World*, John 16. 33. *Marvel not Brethren, that the World hates*

you; 'Tis a good Sign that you belong to God. If you were of the World, the World would love its own: But because Christ hath chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you, Joh. 15. 19. 'Tis the same World which hated Christ, before it hated You, (and 'kill'd him too) and The Servant is not greater than his Lord. And He fore-told; If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you.

If you be Reproached for the Name of CHRIST, or stigmatiz'd with Nicknames, for your Care in serious following His Work, care not for it; it shall in due time turn both to your Honour and Advantage. Garments, which were thought Uncomely, and judg'd Ridiculous on vulgar Backs, have become Modish, been esteem'd Decent, yea Adorning; and have led the Fashion, when Persons of Honour have thought good to wear them. The Cross which was so Infamous, and the greatest Scandal in, and to the World, became the most Honourable Ensign, when the Great Constantine had plac'd it in his Banners, to lead his Victorious Legions. A Deforming Scar adds Beauty to a Souldier, and is a Mark of Honour, and Trophée of his Valour, though received from an Enemy's Hand.

Most

Most ignominious Names, which were impos'd as Brands, to make Men hateful, have chang'd their Nature; and so the Design hath been spoyl'd, by applying them to Vertuous and Excellent Persons. 'Tis confessedly a vile and hateful Thing, to be an *Heretick* indeed; yet, What wise Man will blush to hear himself so called by a *Pagan*, *Jew*, or *Papist*? nay, will not rather glory in't? As St. Paul did *Act. 24. 14. This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things, which are written in the Law, and in the Prophets.*

I have enlarged on this beyond my first Intentions, to remove a base Stumbling-block, and a most dirty, nay most devilish Scandal out of your Way, (which, who-soever first kindled, hath run like Fire in the Stubble, God in Mercy quench it) that is, That if a Man be zealous in Religion, live as if he did believe indeed there is an Heaven and Hell, and that the Way to either, is such as the Word of God describes; that thinks it is *Duty*, and his *Wisdom*, to work out his own *Salvation with fear and trembling*: That ownes he hath a work appointed him of God, which requires the whole Man to perform

form it, and therefore applies himself to it accordingly: In a word, That dares not venture his Eternal Estate upon a few easy Ritual Observances, without the *Life & Power of Godlyness*; & thinks Judgment, Mercy, and Faith, to be of equal, or rather more Concernment, than Tything of Annise, Mynt, and Cummin; though he neither despise, nor neglect the latter in their Place. Such a Man must have sinister Reflections made upon him, be he Minister, or be he private Christian; there is a secret Inquisition to inquire into him; and they return him suspected of some kind of Heretical Pravity: *He is not Right; He is at least half a Phantick; He is not through Pac'd; not a True Son of the Church*; and what not! that Sloath and Formality can invent, to hide its own Shame, by loading Holy Diligence in the Work of God, with opprobrious and sinister Suspicions.

This is a dreadful Stumbling-Block; the Good Lord remove it, for His Mercy sake. I cannot see what the Devil can do more dangerous, than this; To persuade Men, 'tis their Interest to be Wicked; to force them to be cold and negligent in Religion, in their own Defence; and to fright them from keeping Pace

E

with

with *God* in His Wayes, or being im-
 ployed in His Work, with all their Might;
 for fear of being thought and called, what
 would render them more Obnoxious, than
 the deepest Prophaness, or foulest De-
 bauchery: And their Zeal would be as
 dangerous to them, as *Paul's* Learning
 was to him in *Festus's* Judgment; quite
 beside themselves, *Too much Zeal hath*
made them Mad.

Good Lord! What do such Men think
 of the *Holy Bible*, of our Blessed Saviour's
 Example, and Holy Doctrine, of the
Primitive Christians, and Holy Martyrs?
 Were all these stark mad? That all must
 be esteemed so, who endeavour to fol-
 low them, though (Alas!) at too great
 a Distance. And, What do such Men
 think of the Tremendous *Day of Judg-*
ment? Or, Do they indeed believe, there
 shall be such a Day?

I fear, if these Obscure Papers chance
 to fall into the Hands of some of these
 Hot Men; they may be ready to act the
 Part of *Demetrius*, and my self be in dan-
 ger to suffer that of *St. Paul*, Recorded
Act. 19. For Guilt is a very Teachy, and
 a very Vindictive thing. But, I appeal
 to the Searcher of Hearts, I designe not
 the Reproach of Our Church; but its
 Vindi-

Vindication: In which, Blessed be God for it, are *Thousands* that Preach, and *Ten Thousands* that Learn and Obey the Truth as it is Jesus; and Have not so Learned Christ, as to render their Profession, or the Church in which they were taught it, Unsavory, but Sweet as Oyntment poured forth.

And if, this notwithstanding, any be found, who to Compensate for their Want of the Power of Godliness, and Good Morality, in Sobriety and Righteousness; by a furious Zeal, and mighty Noise, for the little disputable Things; (which all confess to be but the *Lift* of our *Cloath*, and *Hem* of our *Garment*, to keep the One from *Rending*, and the Other from *Reveling*) shall appeal to the Church, as its only true and genuine Sons. I sincerely expect the Justice from my Mother, that she will declare such Sons, to be Esteemed by Her no better, than *Augustus* call'd his *Niece* and *Daughter*, his *Sore's* and *Ulcers*.

But my Business in this Place, is not to Reclaim the Guilty, but to Defend and Encourage the Innocent; in the sincere Endeavours, and serious Practice of that faithful industry, which Christ expects from them, in His Work, while the Day to

work in lasts; and which the Church, in His Name, by the Voyce of Her Ministers, (and by Mine amongst the rest, tho the *Meaneſt* amongst many) calls and excites them to.

Take Courage therefore, *Christians*, ply your Work; He that gave you this *Rule*, and set before you His own Example, looks on, and is greatly pleas'd to see you follow it. And if any be so hardy, as to Discourage or Reproach you, it matters not, as long as He will own, and Crown you: And if *Christ* Justify you, what need ye care who shall Condemn you?

The *Second Use* is to Condemn those, who neglect these Engagements, or act contrary to them. *What meanest thou, O Sleeper!* Arise, Is it not more than time, thou hadst began thy Work, when 'tis high time thy Work were finish'd; when many Younger than thy self have brought it to Perfection, rest from their Labour, and have received their Wages? *Why stand you here all the Day idle?* - *Matth. 20 6.* who cannot plead the Excuse of those, who answered, *No Man hath hired us:* For you have been call'd to work an Hundred, yea a Thousand Times. *Why are ye slack to go up to Possess the Land which*

which God hath promised? Is it not a Land that flows with Milk and Honey, that abounds with Rivers of Pleasure, and Fullness of Joy? O Fools that are so slow of Heart to believe!

And greater Fools, if ye believe it, and yet lye still, and with the Sluggard cry, *A little more Sleep, a little more Slumber, a little more Folding of the Arms to Sleep*; till Death and Judgment take you Napping.

Canst thou sleep so securely on both Ears, as never to hear, or be affrighted with a Dream, of those upbraiding Words; *Matth. 25. 26. Thou Wicked and Sloathful Servant*: And the Thoughts of that dreadful Sentence: *Take from him the Talent*: And cast ye the Unprofitable Servant into utter Darknes, there shall be weeping, and gnashing of Teeth? *Vers. 30.* How will thy Mouth be stop't, when thy Lord shall say to thee, *Out of thine own Mouth will I Judge thee, thou wicked sloathful Servant*? *Thou knewest that I was an Austere Man, Luk. 12. 22.* Thou knewest that I had given thee a Work to do, of great Importance; and that I would certainly call thee to a strict Account, concerning the Performance of it: Why then did'st thou not attend it, as it became thee,

thee, as it concern'd thee? 'Tis sad to be *Condemn'd* by another; but to be *Self-Condemn'd*, is of all the saddest: And such will be the Case of every one, who under such Opportunities as thou enjoyest, neglects the Work that God hath given him to do; and given him so frequent, and so faithful Warnings, to dispatch in time. *The Lord of that Servant will come in a Day when he looketh not for Him; and at an Hour when he is not ware; and will cut him in sunder, and appoint him his Portion with Unbelievers. And that Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes, St. Luk. 12. 46, 47.*

The *Third and Last Use*, to which I shall Improve this Truth, is *Exhortation*. And I beseech you Brethren, suffer me with all possible Earnestness to *Exhort* you, and with all humble Importunity to intreat you, to use the Speed and Diligence about this Work, which the Case requires; yea, excite and provoke your selves, and one another, by the Greatness of your Work, and Shortness of your Time; by Conscience of your Duty, and Sense of your Interest,

to acquit your selves as becomes Wise and Good Men, in an Affair of such infinite Consequence.

And because the *Text* seems to have a most direct, yea, its primary Aspect upon us *Ministers*, (with all submits, and inoffensive Modesty I beg it of you)

First, Holy Brethren, suffer this Word of *Exhortation*: What ever others do, let Us mind the Work of him that sent us, as becomes us, and follow the *Example* of our *Master*. Is there a *Must* for Him? Is there a *Necessity* laid upon the *Great Apostle*, and a *Woe* to him, if he *Preach not the Gospel*? Is there a *Curse* denounced against him that doth God's Work Deceitfully, Negligently, Slightly? And, Are those *Epithetes* so Odious, *Dumb Dogs*, *Greedy Dogs*, we have not Patience to hear them, though God Himself impos'd them? Doth a *Sleepy Watch-man* imply a Contradiction in the Terms? And, Is it most Intolerable for the *Steward* to be found Unfaithful, beyond all the *Servants* in the *Family*? And yet, Shall we run the Hazard of branding our selves with these hateful *Characters*? If the *Lights* of the World be *Darkness*, How Great will that *Darkness* be? If the *Salv* of the Earth be *Unfavoury*, What

is it Good for, or where-with shall it be Seasoned?

I question not, but you have often read the *Three* last Verses of *Zech. 11.* and would to God you would read them once a Day; at least, that you would dwell upon the *Meditation* of them one retired Hour. Not to vex the Words with forc't Interpretations, nor to vex your Heads with studying Evasions; but to awaken your hearts to do your Duty, and escape your Danger, I will transcribe the Words faithfully:

And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the Instruments of a Foolish Shepherd: For Lo! I will Raise up a Shepherd in the Land, which shall not visit those that be cut off; neither shall seek the Young One, nor heal that that is Broken, nor feed that that standeth still: But he shall eat the Flesh of the Fat, and rear their Claws in pieces. Wo to the Idol Shepherd, that leaveth the Flock! The Sword shall be upon his Arm, and his Right Eye: His Arm shall be clean dried up, and his Right Eye shall be utterly darkened.

However others may think good to treat me; I would Reproach no Man, Expose no Man, Provoke no Man, Grieve no Man: They that are Guiltless, are not

not concern'd; If any be Guilty, and being so, are Convinced, Awakened, Quickned to their Duty, they have more reason to be thankful, than to be angry.

Of all Men living, we *Ministers* have most cause to mind our Work with Speed and Diligence, both as *Men*, and as *Ministers*.

First, As *Men*. We have Souls to save, as well as our People; and we must take heed to our selves, that our selves may be saved: And to that end, we had need take care to be Good betimes: For 'tis an Old Observation, That of all Orders of *Men*, wicked *Ministers* are most hardly, and most rarely Reformed and Converted. For which, many Obvious and Convincing Reasons are given, which I will not digress to Enumerate. God will be Sanctified in them that draw nigh to Him; and they must be Holy, which bear the Vessels of the Sanctuary.

And as *Ministers*, giving no Offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed; But in all things approving our selves, as the *Ministers of God*, 2 Cor. 6. 3, 4. From the Highest to the Lowest, from the Bishop to the Deacon, all must be Blameless, 1 Tim. 3. Tit. 1.

How shall we Quicken others, if we be dull our selves; or lay those Burdens upon others, which our selves will not touch with the least of our Fingers? Thou that Teacheſt another, Teacheſt thou not thy ſelf? Thou that Preacheſt a Man ſhould not Steal, doſt thou Steal? &c. ſee Rom. 2. from the 18th. to the 25th.

A Careleſs Miniſter provides Excuses for his People, and Reproaches for himſelf. Admire the Meaſ be Wholeſom; yet it will turn Men's Stomacks, if it be Drefſed with Unclean or Leprous Hands. The Snuffers in the Sanctuary were to be of Pure Gold. The Iniquity of Eli's Sons, made Men Abhor the Offerings of the Lord. The Example of a Careleſs Life will pull down more in One Day, than the warmeſt Exhortation can build up in Ten. Would'ſt thou therefore promote God's Work effectually in others, Convince them thou believeſt thy ſelf the Truth, and the Neceſſity of what thou preſſeſt on them.

Secondly, Ye that are Parents, labour to ſeaſon early the tender Hearts of your Children, with a Senſe of Religion, and their Great Work. Youth is the Age of Discipline, and the Seed-time for their whole

whole Life. *Train up a Child in the Way wherein he should go, and when he is Old he will not Depart from it.* The First Impressions are most Lasting. 'Tis a great Honour to be entrusted with the Education of one Child, and to have Opportunity to form it for God's Service. As you were the means of their being Born, and the Occasions of their being Born in Sin; you owe them, both in Love and Justice, your Best Endeavours, that they may be Born again, and made Saints.

The Third and Last Branch of the Exhortation, is to All in general; though more especially to Young Persons.

1. To a Speedy Setting about their great Work.
2. To a Diligent Progress in it, when it is Begun.

First, To a Speedy Setting about this Work. Young Man, I say unto thee, *Arise*: And Oh! that Christ would vouchsafe to accompany this Word with such a Power of His Spirit, as might render it as effectual to some Dead Soul, as they were upon the Dead-Son of the Widdow of Naim. Luk. 7. *Awake thou that sleepest, stand forth from the Dead,* and

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and Christ shall give thee Light. Suppose thou heardest God say to thee, as in the Parable; Son, go work to day in my Vineyard, this present Day; and though thou hast neglected His Call heretofore, yet now Repent and go.

But because it often is with Young Persons (if I may make such an Allusion) as it was with *Lazarus*, when Christ call'd him forth of his Grave; Joh. 11. 44. He that was Dead, came forth bound Hand and Foot, with Grave-Cloaths, and his Face bound about with a Napkin: Therefore, Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go. When they begin to be quickened, and have some Sense of the Necessity of speedy Walking in the Wayes of God; yet their Heads are bound about, they are muffled, and blind-folded with Prejudices, and cannot see their Way; and bound Hand and Foot with Grave-Cloaths, hamper'd and shackled with former Customs and Objections, that they can neither walk in God's Way, nor work for Him: I will endeavour to loose them, and knock off their Fetters, and remove the Lets and Hinderances of their Motion, and their Speed; and I shall do it briefly: For though there may be many Foolish Cavils, there can be neither wise,
nor

nor strong *Objections*, against the present Setting about God's Work; that they should either need much Time or Pains to Remove them.

First then, 'tis *Objected*, That Religion is too serious a Work for Young People; as the *Philosopher* said, Young Men were not fit Hearers of the Precepts of *Morality*; but, *Postquam deferbuit aetas*, after the Heats of Youth are boyl'd over; after their Lusts and Passions have spent themselves, and they have Sow'd their Wild Oats, as your Common Phrase is. The Heat of Youth is a kind of Sickness; and no wise *Physitian* administers in the Heighth of the *Paroxysme*; but stayes till the Fit be over. 'Tis a Degree of *Drunkenness*; and we Reprove not the *Drun-kard* 'till he be Sober, and come to himself.

Answer. These Comparisons prove nothing, and are as easily sleighted as produced. For the main *Objection*:

'Tis true, Religion is a very serious Thing; and therefore, the fitter to restrain the Extravagancy of Youthful Lusts; which, by how much the more Impetuous they are, by so much the stronger Curbs they need, to restrain and keep them in Order:

der: And 'tis the Excellency of the Word of God, and its high Commendation; that 'tis an *Antidote* strong enough to purge out such a Poyson. *Where-wish-all shall a Young Man cleanse his Ways? By taking heed thereto, according to thy Word, Psal. 119. 9.* For a Man to indulge his Lusts, and profess Religion, I confess, were a way to defecrate and pollute so Holy a thing. But Religion minded in Sincerity, will subdue and mortify them; And give *Subtilty to the Simple, to the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion, Prov. 1. 4.* Though Youth hath its Inconveniences, which Religion will Correct; it also hath its Advantages, which Religion will Improve. 'Tis more Vigorous and Active, more Susceptive and Retentive, more Free and Dis-engaged, more Unprejudiced and Dis-incumbred, than the following Stages of Life: And therefore, most acceptable to God, and fittest to be Consecrated to His Work.

Religion will Relieve against the Incommodities of Youth, and give the Prerogatives of Age, and make them Men in Knowledge and Gravity, who are but Youths in Years: For Honourable Age is not that which standeth in Length of Time, nor that is measured by Number
of

of Years; But Wisdom is gray Hair un-
to Men, and unspotted Life is Old Age.
Wisd. 4. 8, 9. yea, gives Prerogatives a-
bove it: For Young David was Wiser
than his Teachers, and had more Under-
standing than the Ancients, because he kept
God's Precepts. Yea, the Wise King car-
ries the Disproportion very high, when
he tells us, Eccles. 4. 13. That a Poor
and Wise Child, is better than an Old and
Foolish King.

Religion therefore is not too serious e-
ven for a Child, seeing it can make a
Child Serious; nor in danger to to be pre-
judiced by the Levity of Youth, seeing
it can Cloath even Youth with Gravi-
ty.

Secondly, A Second Objection against Ear-
ly Piety, is suggested by Superstitious
Fear, that they shall Dye presently, if they
grow Devout; as some Fools think they
must, if they once make their Wills.

Ans. How absurdly do Sinners suffer
themselves to be abused by the Devil, and
their own vain Hearts? They now be-
gin to be fit to Live, therefore they must
presently Dye! How inconsequent is this
Conclusion! How Unreasonable such Rea-
soning! As if God would suffer none but
Fools

Feels and Knaves, to Live; and those Wicked Men, with whom He is Angry every Day, and for whom He hath Prepar'd the Instruments of Death; and Hath whet His Sword, and bent His Bow, and made all ready for speedy Execution, if they turn not, Psal. 7. 11, 12, 13. God calls the Righteous, Lights; and he hath more use for them to Shine in the World, than to whelm them Under the Bushel of Death, as soon as he hath set them up, to Shine in a Crooked and Perverse Generation.

'Tis Bloody and Deceitful Men, against whom the Sentence is pronounc't, That they shall not Live out half their Dayes: But of Wisdom it is said, that Length of Dayes is in her Right Hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honour, Prov. 3. 16. And St. Peter 1. 3. 10. He that will love Life, and see good Dayes, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil; and his Lips from speaking Guile. Let him eschew Evil, and do Good.

Finally, We find this Encouragement given to the Good Man, Job 5. 26. That he shall come to his Grave in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in, in his Season.

Early

Early Piety puts any Man out of danger of Dying ill, but it puts no Man in danger of Dying soon.

Thirdly, A Third Objection is drawn from Prophane Proverbs, of the Devils making to fright Young Ones; or at least, to excuse them; Such as, A Young Saint, and an Old Devil; Soon Ripe, soon Rotten; mis-applied to this Matter, and such like.

Ans^r. 'Tis true, I confess, very often, (and 'tis Just with God it should be so) That a Young Hypocrite, proves an Old Apostate: And they who studyed more to appear, than to be, Good; shall cease to appear, what they cared not to be: And those who took up the Form of Godlyness, without the Power, shall lose the Credit of their Form, for neglecting the Substance of the Power. And They who would not receive the Love of the Truth, that they might be Saved; shall be subject to strong Delusions, to believe Lyes, that they may be Damn'd, 2 Thes. 2. because they took Pleasure in Unrighteousness, even while they made Pretensions unto Righteousness. But the Way of the Just is as the Shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the Perfect Day, Prov. 4. 14. The Righteous

reous shall hold on his way, and he that is of Clean Hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job 17. 9. Those that be Planted in the House of the Lord, shall Flourish in the Courts of our God; they shall still bring forth Fruit in Old Age; they shall be Fat and Flourishing, Psal. 92. 14.

And he that Blossoms in the Spring of his Youth, shall bear Ripe Fruit in the Autumn of his Years: And the Young Saint shall be an Old Angel.

Fourthly, They think they may Live long, they have *time* enough before them; they that Begat, and brought them Forth, are yet Alive; and the World is full of Men and Women, older than their Parents; and they find themselves of as strong a Constitution, as the best of them; and therefore, hope they may Live as long as the Oldest of them: and have *time* to begin this Work, and finish it too, though they think not on't yet many a Year.

Ans. What *May* be, hath alwayes a *May* not be, of equal Possibility. Thou mayest Live Twenty Years; and thou mayest Dye in less than half so many Dayes. For, What is your Life? It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then

then vanisheth away, St. Jam. 4. 14. A Puff of Light Air, soon blown away: The Healthiest Constitutions, are alwayes as lyable to External Accidents, as the most Crazy; and usually more subject to Infectious, and Contagious Diseases. And I appeal to your own Observation, whether, (compare one Family with another) the Number of Deceased Children, do not far exceed that of surviving, both Parents and Brethren. Therefore, trust not to that, which hath deceived so many; nor lean upon that broken Reed, (*The Hope of Long Life*) which hath more than wounded the Hand, hath shivered under Thousands, that put much Stress upon it, and let them drop into the *Infernal Pit*, from whence is no Redemption.

Fifthly, The Example of most Young People; and why may not they venture, as well as others?

Answe. 'Tis too true, too many Young People defer their Repentance, and delay their Work: But 'tis as true, 'tis like to cost them Dear, and prove their Ruin; and if thou wilt be Damnd for Company, thou art more Cruel to thy self, than Kind to them. The Most are the Worst; and we are warned against following a

Mul-

Multitude in evil. *The many* are in the broad, the bad way, and the way to life is found by few. We must live by *Rule*, not by *Example*: and if thou wilt needs follow *Precedents*, chuse the wisest, not the *most*. And those are they that take Time by the Fore-lock, will not part with the *Substance*, to catch at the *Shadow*, nor neglect the Present, in hopes of the Future; which is uncertain, whether it shall ever be: Nay, most probable, it shall not; and most certain, it may never be.

Sixthly and *Lastly*, The strongest *Objection* is raised from abused *Scriptures*. That *Poyson* is most dangerous, and diffuseth it self most speedily, and incurably, which is administred in the strongest *Liquors*. When the *Devil* had Impudence to tempt the *Lord of Glory*, he had Cunning to assault Him with this Weapon; It is written, *He shall give his Angels Charge over thee, &c.* And so, when he sets his Snares for poor Men, if he can Wire-draw a Text, to make a *Gin* of it, if he can abuse the *Word*, and make what should be a *Light* to our Feet, and a *Lanthorne* to our Paths, to guide us to Heaven, an *Ignis Fatuus*, or a *Will-
ib-Whisp*,

to *Wisp*, to amuse us, and wilder us, and make us lose our selves in *Bogs*, and among *Precipices*; he hath done his *Business*, and concludes he is sure of us.

Now, amongst many, these are not the *fellest* press to serve his Design:

At what time so-ever a *Sinner* repenteth him of his Sin, I will put all his *Wickedness* out of My Remembrance, saith the Lord, Ezek. 18. 11. And as he will *Cur-tail*, and leave some-what out; so he will put a *Signal Emphasis* upon what he expects should wound and kill. At what time so-ever; though never so late: And that in the 20th. of St. Matthew, They that went not into the Vineyard till the Eleventh Hour; at Five a Clock, but one Hour before they all left Work; yet these sa'd as well, Had every Man a penny, as much Wages, as They that went in the Morning, and bore the Burden and Heat of the Day.

But above all, the *Thief* on the Cross; that's his *Goliath's Sword*, that's his *Inchan-ge'd Spear*, his trusty *Truncheon*! What need you make such haste? Remember you not the *Thief* on the Cross? He was Nail'd to the *Fatal Tree*, a *Thief*, a *Miscreant*, as wicked a *Villain*, as ever liv'd; and yet you know, he Repented, and went

went that very Day to *Paradise*; which it may be he never thought on before, nor ever desired, or prepared himself to go to. These I confess, are *deadly Weapons*, and he makes many Mortal Thrusts with them, and wounds and kills Eternally, unwary, and unarmed Sinners; therefore take your Shield to Repel them, lest they pierce you through and through.

Ans. These I confess would bear a larger, and more Elaborate Confutation: But I hope, a briefer One may serve; and a little *Armour* well put on, may render you impregnable.

First therefore, As to that of *Ezekiel*, without insisting upon the Exactness of the Words, as they are set down in our New *Liturgy*, and Correct what was more subject to mistake in the Old One.

I deny not, but that *Whensoever a Sinner Repents him truly of all his Sins, from the Bottom of his Heart*, God will shew him Mercy: But I deny, that he who sins *Presumptuously*, in Confidence of *Future Repentance*, is sure, nay, or likely to obtain it.

Vain Man! Is it as *easy* to Repent, as to Sin? Canst thou *Lift* thy self up out of a *Deep Well*, because thou canst *Throw* thy

thy self down into the *Bottom* of it? Doth not this depend *immediately* upon his Help, whose *Gift* Repentance is? Must not God give thee both *Space* to Repent in, and *Grace* to Repent with, if ever thou Repent in truth? And though he hath often promis'd *Pardon* to Repentance, he hath never promis'd Repentance to *Presumptuous Sinners*; but contrarily, To wound the *Head*, and *Hairy Scalp* of them, who go on in their *Iniquities*. This Course hardens thy Heart against God, that it cannot Repent: and may justly harden His Heart against thee, never to give thee Repentance; it being but a *Peradventure*, in the most favourable Case. 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. If God *Peradventure* will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth, and that they may Recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are led Captive of him at his Will. Though all Sin is dangerous; yet none sin so desperately, as those who sin upon *Presumption* of Repentance.

As to that of the *Eleventh Hour*: Take heed of stretching *Parables* too far. However, remark the Words in *Matth. 20. 7.* When he went out at the *Eleventh Hour*, and said, Why stand ye here Idle all the Day long? They answered roundly, *Be-
cause*

cause no Man hath Hired us. This is a fair Excuse. They come soon enough, who come at the First Call; and they go to work in due time, who go as soon as they are sent, or their Work is set them. But, What is this to you, who have been call'd a Hundred times,; yea, commanded to your Work a Thousand? He that being often Reproved, hardneth his Neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without Remedy, Prov. 29. 1. how well soever he may speed, who obeyes the First Warning God gives him.

As to that of the Thief on the Cross; who went on a Sinner, and came off a Saint: As the Cross of Christ was a scandal to many at the First; so the Cross of this Happy Thief, is an Unhappy Occasion of stumbling and falling to not a few, to this very Day. But many have been the Answers, which have been given, to remove it out of the way; that no more may stumble at it:

There were Two Thieves Crucified at that time, and but One Repented; and thou mayst prove the Impenitent One: and, What will thy Case then be? But that's the very least that can be said. There is but this One Example in all the Bible; and this One is Recorded, that

none might Despair; and but this One, that none may Presume. And this being a single Instance, (we say, One Swallow makes no Summer) thou may'st as well Spur thy Ass, till thou make him speak, because thou readeſt, Balaam's Ass once spake with Man's Voyce, (as Holy Mr. Greenham smartly upbraids such Men's Folly) as promise thy self the like.

But consider the Time; it was when our Lord was Crucified in greatest Ignominy; and He thought good to shew His Royalty, and an extraordinary Munificence, to counterballance the Infamy of His Dying on the Accursed Tree; and it was a thing becoming His Wisdom and Goodness, to give a Signal Instance, and Early Proof, of the Efficacy of His Death, and His Father's Acceptance of His Obedience. And 'tis a great Word one speaks upon it; You may as well expect Christ to be Crucified again, as expect such another Instance of such unusual Mercy.

Kings may on their Coronation-Day open the Prisons, and let loose Offenders, such as they will not Pardon afterwards, in all their Reign. The Conduits may then flow with Wine, though they run Common Water alwayes after: And the Thief's Case was Extraordinary, which might in

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Some Measure entitle him to Extraordinary Favour. He Pleaded *Christ's* Cause openly, Rebuked his Fellow-Sufferer, Own'd a Rejected Saviour, when the Priests and Elders not only Condemned Him, but Mocked and Blasphemed Him; and when His own Followers fled and forsook Him, and were either afraid, or ashamed to Own Him. And was, as one calls him, *The Apostle of the Apostles*; aptly supplying Judas's Room: For, whom he (who was a Thief, Joh. 12. 6.) had Betray'd to the Cross, this Good Thief Preached, whilst he was upon it.

More Objections might have been Started, and as easily Answered, and more have been said to These; but I hope, this may suffice.

I beseech you therefore, *All*, especially you *Young Ones*, into whose Hands this may fall; up, and be doing, *Defer* not a Day, not an Hour longer, e're you set upon this Great Work; Grieve not the Blessed Spirit, when He knocks, when He calls at the Door of thy Heart. Say not to Him, as *Felix* did to *Paul*; Go thy way now, when I have a Convenient Time, I will send for thee; lest that Time never come,

come, or He despise thy sending for Him, who hath rejected Him so often, when He came of His own Accord. But take heed you be not Discouraged at the Beginnings of a New Work: First On-sets are most Difficult. 'Tis the Neck unaccustomed to the Yoke, that winches and complains of it: A little Wearing it, will make it Easy. He that hath begun well, hath half Finished. As 'tis safest to Resist Evil, in the Beginning; so 'tis the wisest Course, to begin quickly and resolvedly, what is Good, and must be done: The Engine which is hardly set a-going, is easily continued to move, when 'tis once in Motion. It hath been observed, most are Converted Young, that are ever Converted truly. O ye Young Ones, Confirm that Observation by your Speedy Turning unto God! But then, resolve to proceed in your Work with Diligence, which is the Last Thing to be spoken to.

I might in this place, add more Motives to quicken your Speed: But I shall rather refer you back (at present) to those in the preceding Discourse; and subjoyn here those Considerations, which may provoke your Diligence: Amongst which, a

Place will be found to touch this String again conveniently.

Now, in this *Exhortation to Diligence*, *Three Things* will be requisite, to render it more effectual :

1. *To Caution you against the Hindrances, which Obstruct it.*
2. *To Direct you to the Helps, which Promote it.*
3. *To Lay down the Motives, which Provoke to it.*

First, That you may proceed with *Diligence* in the Work of God, beware of the *Hindrances*, which would *Obstruct* it : Which are of *Two* sorts :

The *First*, we may call *Doctrinal*, or in *Opinion*.

The *Second*, *Real*, or in *Practice*.

I shall briefly point at *Three* of either sort.

1. Take heed of esteeming it so *Easy*, that it needs it not.
2. That, on the contrary Extream, you judge it not so *Difficult*, and even *Impossible*, that no *Diligence* can effect it.
3. That you think not so *Meanly*, and *Basely* of it, that it doth not deserve it.

When

When a Business is propounded to be done, if it appear under any of these *No-*
tions, no Wise Man will attempt it with any Vigour: For, Why should he bestow a great deal of Pains and Labour, when he plainly fore-sees, it is either needless, and may be spar'd, or will prove useless, and must be lost. But if it appear very *Hard* and *Difficult*, but yet *Hope'ul* and *Possible* to be attained; and withal, most *Necessary*, and very *Excellent*, and *Advantageous*: This will Excite and Raise that Soul, that hath any Principles of Prudence, Generosity, or Care of its own Good.

First, Account not this Work so *Easy*, as 'tis most evident too many do; who under fullest Convictions, and profess'd Acknowledgments, that there is such an *Heaven* and *Hell*, as the *Bible* describes; and that it so infinitely concerns them to obtain the One, and escape the Other, as is there declared; yet Live so securely, and negligently, that they proclaim to all the World, they think it next to *Impossible*, to miscarry; and swear by their *Hopes of Salvation*, as the most *Sacred Affelevation*; while they are running headlong in the Broad-way, that leads to Destruction.

Surely, these must think *God's Work* very *Easy*, who flatter themselves, that they can carry it on sufficiently, while they are serving the *Devil*, and their *Lusts*, with both *Hands* greedily. It may not be impertinent to mind such Men of the *Romish Fryar's Lenten Sermon*; which, before many *Cardinals*, and *Great Men* of that *Court*, he began abruptly thus:

St. Peter was a Fool, and St. Paul was a Fool, and all the Primitive Christians were meer Fools; who took such a deal of Care and Pains, to please God, and save their Souls; and thought the Way to Heaven, was by Self-Denyal and Mortification, Prayers and Fasting; by Severities, and denying the Poms of this Wicked World: And You at Rome, indulge yourselves in Ease and Sloth, live in your Lusts and Luxury, and spend your Time in Pomp and Pleasure; and yet account your selves very good Christians; and doubt not, but you shall be saved: But, at last, You'll be found the Fools, and They the Wise Men.

For 'tis the part of *Wisdom*, to proportion the *Means* to the *End*; and 'tis great *Folly*, to waste *Time* and *Strength*, and
make

make a great Stir and Bustle about that, which may be done (as you say) with a wet Finger; and 'tis so also, to act coldly and faintly in that, which cannot be accomplish'd without great Industry.

I beseech you therefore, beware of such an Opinion, as will greatly tempt you to be Remiss in the Work of God; and remember who bid, *Strive to enter in at the Streight-Gate*; withal, telling you, *That many of those who strive, shall not be able to get in*: What then shall become of them, who strive not? *The Violent take the Kingdom of Heaven*. As he that Asks faintly, bespeaks a Denyal; so he that Acts faintly, will be surely Disappointed.

Besides what was said before, it were easie to add many Evidences, to prove this Work to be Hard; and that 'tis very Reasonable, it should be so. The Way is Steep and Slippery, 'tis hard to climb it; the Enemies are Many and Mighty, that Oppose thee; thy Skill and Strength is small; Nature will recoil, and draw back; and single Nature is hardly overcome: and Custom of Sinning, is a Second Nature; and doubtless the Difficulty, and no Discipline, is so hard, as

for him to learn to do Well, who hath been accustomed to do Evil. *Self* is a bold Competitor with *God*; and must be used Roughly, or it will be serv'd before Him, and set up above Him: And for thy own Dear Sake, thou wilt be prone to cry, as *David* for his Darling *Absolom*; Deal gently with it, for my Sake: And, by a strange Fondness, thou wilt spare the Traytor, which watches to destroy thee. Though *Christ* Rejected the Temptation, Favour thy self, with a Get thee behind Me, *Satan*; yet when such Sugar'd Words are offer'd thee, thou'lt hardly discern the Poyson that's mixt with them.

And there are many Reasons, why *God* hath made his own Work hard; that those who Wear the Crown, may Win it first: For a Man is not Crown'd, unless he strive Lawfully: That he may appear Impartial, in Rejecting Loyerers, and Rewarding Labourers: That his Servants may have Opportunity to exercise those Graces, which else there would be no occasion for: That Rest may be sweeter after Labour: And that *God's* Grace may be Magnified, in assisting their Weakness; and *Satan* may be more Confounded, in the Disappointment of all his Stratagems.

Believe

Believe therefore thy Work to be hard; that thou betray not thy self to Sloth and Remissness, to thy own Eternal Ruin.

Secondly, Yet run not into the other Extream, while thou avoydest this; and dash not against Scylla, while thou avoydest Charybdis: Conclude not, 'tis Impossible to finish it by Labour; because it is so, to accomplish it without Labour. Despair of Success kills all Industry; and a supposed Impossibility of Attainment, naturally produces Despair. When once we say, *There is no Hope*; the next word will be, *Why should I wait any longer? Why should I strive any more?* But, Be not Sloathful; but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. Faith and Patience will do that, which Sloth and the want of them can never do.

And watch carefully against that Snare, Satan layes in the way of so many; *If I be not Elected, all my Labour will be in vain: I cannot alter God's Decrees.*

Vain Creature! What hast thou to do with God's Decrees? Who made thee of His Council? Mind thou what is written in the Word, *Which is nigh thee in*

thy Mouth, and in thy Heart: Not what is written in the Secret Records of Heaven. Read Deut. 29. 29.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God: But those things which are Revealed, belong to Us, and to our Children, for ever; that we may do all the Words of this Law. And Deut. 30. 11, 12, 14. This Commandment, which I command thee this Day, is not hid from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it. But the Word is nigh unto thee in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou may'st do it. See, I have set before you this Day, Life and Good, Death and Evil. Compare Rom. 10. 6, ---9. This is the Word of Faith which we Preach; If thou Confess with thy Mouth, and believe in thine Heart, thou shalt be saved.

Not, if thou be Elected, thou shalt be Saved, whether thou believest, whether thou workest out thy Salvation, or no: This is to begin at the wrong End; as if a Man would begin to Build a House at the Roof, and Build downwards; Build the Roof in the Air, before any thing were laid on Earth to bear it up. St. Pe-

ter teaches another Method, 2 Pet. i. 5. Giving all Diligence, add to your Faith Vertue, &c. For if these Things be in you, and abound, they make you, that you shall be neither Barren nor Unfruitful, &c. And, Vers. 10. Giving Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure. First Calling, then Election; and Diligence to know, and to make sure Both.

How many Scriptures speak the same Sense, (nay, 'tis the Scope of all the Scripture) with Gal. 6. 7, 8, 9. Whatsoever a Man Soweth, that shall he also Reap; for he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting. And let us not be weary in Well-doing; for in due Season we shall Reap, if we faint not.

Therefore, neither scare thy self from thy Duty, nor flatter thy self in thy Negligence, by any Decrees of God; which are hidden from thee, and thou art a Stranger to. But quicken and comfort thy self with this Truth, which is written as with a Sun-beam from Heaven; That no Decree of God shall ever shut him out of Heaven, who with sincere Faithfulness, and humble Diligence, attends God's Work, according to his Written Word: Neither shall

shall any Decree of God admit him into Heaven, who securely and slothfully neglects it. And if after thou hast got over that Stumbling - Block of *Fear'd Impossibility*; yet thou stickest, and art frightened at, the Difficulty: Consider, 'tis no greater than the Wise and Holy God thinks fit to make it, and that for Righteous and Holy Reasons; and He knows how to proportion every Man's Work to his Abilities: And as *He will not suffer any of His to be Tempted above their Strength*; so neither will he task them above their Sufficiency, they shall receive from Him. And thou may'st Counterballance the Hardness of thy Work, by weighing its Necessity, its Excellency, the Assistance He is ready to afford thee, the Acceptance He hath promised thee, and the Superlative Greatness of the Reward prepared for thee. So that thou may'st say; *I reckon that the Sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be Revealed in us, Rom. 8. 18. For our light Afflictions, (and yet the Patient Bearing them, is the hardest peice of our work) which are but for a moment, work for us a far more Exceeding, and Eternal Weight of Glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17. as Joseph said, His*
Glory

Glory in *Egypt* made him *Forget all his Toyl, and his Father's House*: So I may invert the Words; Thy Father's House will make thee (in one Hour) forget all the Toyl of the *Brick-Hills*, and Bondage of the *Egypt* of this *VWorld*: Though to the Corrupt Sense of *Flesh and Blood*, Wicked Men seem to have the Advantage of Good Men, in respect of their *Work*; yet Good Men have the Advantage of them infinitely, in respect of their *Master*. The Saints may have *Hard Work*, but they have no *Hard Master*; but *One* who will help them to do their *Work*, and yet Reward them, as if themselves had done it. But Sinners have an *Hard Master*, with their *Easy Work*; and one hours Payment of their Wages for the Works of the *Flesh*, will be more Afflictive, than the Labour of an whole Life would have been, in the Mortifying of them.

The *Third Hinderance* of thy *Diligence*, to be a voyded, is a low, a mean, a base *Opinion* of the *Work*, as if it deserved it not. The *Proverb* saith, That *Jupiter is not at leisure to attend little things*; and the high-soaring *Eagle* stoops not to catch *Flyes*: Nor will a *Wise Man* fish
with

with a Golden Hook, to take Fish of low Value. But a better Authority asks us; *Wherefore do ye spend Money for that, which is not Bread? and your Labour, for that which satisfieth not?* Isa. 55. 2. And, *What Profit hath he, who hath laboured for the Wind?* Eccles. 5. 16. and Reproacheth them, who weary themselves for *very Vanity*, Hab. 2. 13. and warns us *Not to labour for the Meat that perisheth*, Joh. 6. And 'tis truly a Reproach to a Man, to bestow much Pains on that which will not answer it. And if the *Devil*, or thy own Heart, can mis-perswade thee concerning God's Work, and turn the same *Weapon* against thy Diligence in it, which God hath formed against thy Labouring in theirs; 'twill have the like Effect to make the Miserable, which God design'd, by the Right Application of it, to make the Happy.

Study therefore the *Excellency* of this Work, which directly tends to rescue thee out of the *Basest slavery* to *Sin* and *Satan*, to repair thy *Decayed Nature*, to restore and recover the *Image of God*, and make thee Partaker of the *Divine Nature*; to fill thy Soul with Peace, and the *Angels of Heaven* with Joy; to deliver thee from the Hurt, and Fear of
Death,

Death, and from Eternal Vengeance, and to fit thee for, and bring thee to Eternal Glory, in God's Kingdom: And, were there nothing else to be said of it, or for it, that Work must needs be *Excellent*, which renders them more *Excellent than their Neighbours*; and denominates them the *Excellent of the Earth*, and such as the *World is not Worthy of*, who are Employ'd in it. And that Work cannot be Mean or Base, which the High and Glorious God injoynes, loves to behold us at, will reward with Incorruptible Crowns of Glory; and differs only in Degree, but not in Kind, from the Work in which all Great and Noble Souls shall spend, or rather enjoy in Eternity, with increasing Joy and Satisfaction.

The *Hinderances* of your *Diligence*, which I call *Real*, or in *Practice*; and which I warn you to beware of, are these *Three*:

First, *Ignorance*, (or Unskilfulness) how to set about it, or to manage your Work aright. There is no Work or Business can be done well, without some Skill and Experience; not the Meanest, or Easiest. The *Plough-man*, and the *Thresher*,
Isaiah

Isaiah takes notice of, Chap. 28. 26. *His God doth instruct him to Discretion, and doth Teach him.* 'Tis an easy thing to Read; yet deliver the Book to him that hath not learnt his Letters, and bid him Read, *He saith, I am not Learned,* Isa. 29. 12. he cannot do it. A Man that is Master of his Trade, and skilful at it, will dispatch more in an Hour, without Noise or Bustle; than another Man, who bungles at it, with much Toyl and Sweating, in an whole Day. A Man that is *Instructed to the Kingdom of God, brings forth readily out of his Treasury, Things New and Old.* Matth. 13. 52. He that knowes his Way, goes on cheerfully, and rids Ground apace, and loses no time by stopping to Inquire, or Recover what he had lost, by turning into By-paths.

As *Knowledge* is a leading Grace, and influenceth all our Work; and the Prudence of a Man will direct his Way: So *Ignorance* is the Root of Errour, and the most Universally Destructive. He cannot do *God's Work* with any Comfort and Assurance, who knows it not; but is sometimes right, and sometimes wrong, alwayes Anxious and uneasy to himself; *Putting Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness; calling Good Evil, and Evil Good.*

Good. The Blind swallows many a Fly, commits many a Sin, he knows not to be Sins; and if he doth good, 'tis but by Chance; he loseth the Advantage of it, because he knew it not to be so; and therefore, could not do it in Faith: *For what-ever is not of Faith, is Sin, Rom. 14. ult.*

The *Heart* cannot be Good without *Knowledge*, nor thy Work Good without a Good *Heart*.

Wisdom is the Principal Thing (to direct thee in thy Work;) therefore, *Get Wisdom; and with all thy getting, get Understanding, Prov. 4. 7.* No Man can aim Right, that Shoots blindfold.

Ignorance will blind thy Eyes, that thou can'st not see thy Mark, *God's Glory*, and thy own Salvation. The *Text* is express, *That in the Night no Man can Work:* And one Reason given to Confirm it, was, Because 'tis too dark to see to work in. The most thou can'st do in the *Night of Ignorance*, is to grope like a Blind Man; and how thou art like to Finish so curious a Work, in such a case, I leave it to thy self to Judge: Therefore, provide against so Real, and so Great a *Hinderance*.

The *Second Real Hinderance* is, The Indulging of the Flesh, and a Desire to gratify it, by the Inordinate Love of Ease and Pleasure. If this Humour prevail, and thou be Delicate, Soft, and Tender, thou wilt shrink and give back, at the first Difficulty which steps forth to meet thee. He is not fit to make a Souldier, that can endure no Hardship. Thou therefore endure Hardness as a Good Souldier of Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 2. 3. He that loveth Pleasure, shall be a Poor Man, Prov. 21. 17. And whoso loves his Ease, Poverty shall come upon him as an Armed Man. They can never serve God acceptably, who serve their Lusts and Pleasures willingly: And they Who are Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God, may possibly attain a Form of Godlyness, but will certainly Deny the Power of it, 2 Tim. 3. 4, 5. For the Pleasures of this World, choke the Seed of the Word, and they bring forth no Fruit unto Perfection, Luk. 8. 14.

The *Third Real Hinderance*, is, Incumbrance with Multitude of Cares, and Worldly Affairs. This over-charges the Heart, and distracts the Mind, that it cannot wait on God. No Man can serve God and Mammon. Our Breasts are too narrow,

narrow, to lodge so many, and so contrary Inmates. We cannot look Upwards and Downwards both at once. If, *Carmine fecissimum scribentis & ora poscunt*, a Poet's Thoughts must be free, and disintangled; Religion requires it much more: Enter thou into thy Closet, and shut to thy Door, to shut out Distractions.

I deny not, but while we Live in this World, wee need the things of this World; and we may lawfully seek them, and use them: But then we must seek, and use them lawfully; which is done, when we keep them at due Distance, allow them (at most) but the Second Place. Use them, as if we us'd them not; remembering the Time is short, and that the Fashion of this World passeth away. If Hagar domineer, and begin to despise her Mistress Sarah, she must be made to know, she's but a Bond-Maid, and she must be cast out.

Next to them who cannot find an Heart to serve God, they are to be pittied who cannot find Time to serve Him: And the truth is, they therefore can find no Time for this Work, because they can find no Heart to it; and they therefore can find no Heart, because the World hath stolen it away. 'Tis said by the

Pro-

Prophet, Wine and Women take away the Heart, Hof. 4. 11. And 'tis as true, Riches and Business, and Multiplicity of Affairs, and a Croud and Hurry of Employments, take it away no less. If some Men can scarce find *time* to *Eat* and *Sleep*, as well as they love their Bodies; What *Time* do you think, they will find to *Read*, and *Pray*, and *Meditate*, and search their Consciences, and purify their Souls? Of all Remote Advantages, which *Religion* may have, I esteem none Greater than Retirement, Vacancy, a Time to be still, and *Commune with our Hearts*, call our *Wayes* to Remembrance; to think, and consider, and to have Leisure to *Converse with God*. I acknowledge the Truth of *Solomon's Va soli*, *Woe to him that is alone*; yet 'tis as true, *Va nunquam soli*, *Woe to him that will not*, *Woe to him that cannot*; but, most of all, *Woe to him that dares not be alone*!

The *Second Branch* of this *Use*, is to Direct you to the *Helps* which will Promote your *Diligence*; which amongst others, are these:

Willingness, Love, Wisdom, Speed, Industry, Courage, Constancy, or Perseverance.

First,

First, *Willingness*, or a Good Will to your *Work*. The willing Man, will be a Diligent Man. *Willingness* is the Rise, or leading Step to *Diligence*. 'Tis not only Oyl to your *VVheels*, but the very *VVheels* themselves: And Men drive heavily, like *Pharaoh's Chariot's*, when the *VVheels* were taken off, when they want a *Willing Mind* to what they are engaged in: *VVhen* on the contrary, *Willingness* makes them like the *Chariots of Aminadab*, *Cant. 6. 12*, sets them on the *Chariots of my Willing People*, as the *Margin* there. The First *VVork* upon the Soul, is described *Psal. 110. 3*. *Thy People shall be Willing in the Day of Thy Power*. In *God's Offerings* for the *Tabernacle*, the *Directions* were to Receive them from them who brought them with a *Willing Heart*, *Exod. 35. 5, 21, 29*. And when they were *Willing*, they bring more than enough, *Exod. 36. 5*.

Willingness will need a *Bridle*, rather than a *Spur*. That Picture of *Diligence*, drawn by *Solomon's Pen*, of the *Virtuous Woman*, hath This inserted, as the Soul of all the Rest; *She worketh Willingly with her Hands*, *Prov. 31. 13*.

Willingness to your *VVork*, will help your *Diligence* in it many wayes; For it will

will make you *Docile* and *Careful* to learn your *VWork*. You use to let Children chuse their Professions; knowing they will learn that soonest, they have most mind to. 'Twill make you *Cheerful* and *Ready* in the Undertaking it. We use to say, *There is nothing to a Willing Mind*. What the *Naturalist* saith of the *Hand*, the *Moralist* saith of the *Will*; *It is the Instrument of Instruments*.

A Man treads that Path, in which his *Will* leads him, as if he did not feel the Ground he goes on. 'Tis the best *Sauce*; all things Taste, as it doth Season them: And Things are Dear or Cheap, according to the Price it sets upon them. It will make Men *Serious*, and in good Earnest; they will netiher speak faintly, nor act coldly, about what they have engag'd their *Wills* in. They will not trifle, as those do who are *in Bivisio*, know not their own Minds, nor what themselves would have.

Be *Willing* therefore to your *Work*; that will make you *Diligent* at it.

Secondly, *Love to your Work*, will double your *Diligence* about it. *Love* is the Flower, the Cream of *Willingness*; nay, the Quintessence and Spirits of it. If *Willingness* gives Feet, *Love* will give Wings.

Wings. Jacob served Seven Years for Rachel; and they seem'd but as so many Days, because he Lov'd her. The Servant that Lov'd his Master, would refuse the Freedom the Law provided for him; and would have his Ear bored at his Door-Post, and be his Servant for ever; not by Constraint, but Choyce.

No Work is Hard, no Commands is Grievous, to him that Loves. 'Tis a mighty VVeight, and excites both quick and constant Motion. It offers a pleasing, welcom Violence; and constrains to follow whithersoever it leads, without Struggling or Resisting.

Love fulfils the Law, and keeps the Commandments; yea, is a Law unto it self, and the strongest Scepter to rule and bow Men to Obedience; and when 'tis Perfect, Obedience will be so too.

Get therefore thy Heart possess'd with Love to God: These Cords will bind thee, will Charm thee to thy Work; and there's no fear, but thou wilt be Diligent.

Thirdly, *Wisdom*. This is the Soul of Diligence. A Man may make a great Bustle to very little, yea, to very ill purpose, if he be Destitute of *Wisdom*, to Contrive and Manage his Work to the best

best Advantage. The *Ant*, which is the Natural Emblem of *Diligence*, is said to be *Exceeding Wise*, Prov. 30. 24, 25. *Tarpet robor sine Prudentia*: Strength is good for little, without good Contrivance to direct; and *Wisdom is profitable to Direct*, Eccles. 10. 10. and it *Strengtheneth the Wise more than Ten mighty Men, that are in the City*, Eccles. 7. 19. Which made *Wise Solomon* conclude, That *Wisdom is better than Strength*, Eccles. 9. 16. What will a well-rigg'd Ship do with a full Gale, without a *Pilot*, but dash against the Rocks, or run upon the Sands? Or a Hot-mettled Horse, without a Sober Rider, but heat and melt himself, to his own Ruin?

Wisdom will many wayes assist *Diligence*; for it will contrive, and find out fit means, to bring Purposes to pass; or will readily close with them, when they are discovered. There is a *Diligence* in the Head, as well as of the Hand; to Fore-cast, and Contrive, as well as Execute. And it will know fit Seasons, and fasten on them, and improve them.

There is a Season for every Thing, and a Time to every Purpose under the Sun: And 'tis *Wisdom*, which both knows these Seasons, and knows how to use them.

Labour

Labour well tim'd, is the Life of Labour. One Blow upon the Heated Iron, will do more than Twenty while it is Cold. It will also fore-see *Hinderances*, and prevent and obviate them: It will make Suppositions, and put Cases, and provide accordingly: And carry with it, what it hopes it shall not have Occasion for; yet would not want it, in case there should. It will sit down, and consider what it has to do, and what it will cost to finish it; and then provides accordingly. Prepare thy Work without, and make it fit for thy self in the Field; and after Build thy House. And lastly, It will proportion Labour to Strength, that it may hold out, and not be tired.

Fourthly, Speed, and timely Application to thy Work, is neither the Least, nor the Last Help to Diligence. Expedition is the Life of Action. 'Tis next to doing no Time, to resolve not to do till next Time. You would count him no Diligent Servant, who lingers and trifles; and has not begun, when others have half done their Dayes Work. I made haste, and prolonged not the Time, to keep thy Commandments.

Alexander being ask't, How he Con-
G quered

quered the World so soon, so young, by Thirty Years Old? Answered, By Desiring nothing.

And Caesar, Emulous of his Glory, pursued it in the same Methods; and used to be quicker in his Marches, than the Wings of *Fame*; and prevent the Report of his Coming, by being the *First Messenger* of it: That his Enemies saw him come, before they heard he was coming; and fell on immediately: That he often came upon them, and over-came them, all at once; and the *Battle* was often hot, before the *Day* was so.

Speed hath the Promise of Success; They that seek Me early, find Me, Prov. 8. 17. Speed Rises at the First Call; and the Diligent Man bespeaks the Watch-man to awake him, that he may not over-sleep himself: And neither cheats it Self, nor mocks God, with the Uncivil Civility; I'll go, Sir, by and by. *Modesta negatio procrastinatio*: Delay is but a mannerly Denial, at the best; and but a Mask for the Rudeness of a flat Refusal of Duty: And those, who are ashamed bluntly to say, *We will not*, disguise their Disobedience, by saying, *We will here-after*. But this Language is never found in the Mouth of Diligence. God charges us concerning our

our Brother; Say not to him, Go thy way, and come again to Morrow, when thou hast it by thee; Prov. 3. 28.

Speed layes no Blocks in its own way, invents no Occasions of Delay; seeks no Excuses, like idle Boys, who lose their Books, or hide their Hats, to have some Pretext to play the Truants, and stay from School. 'Tis the Slothful Man, who saith, There is a Lyon in the way, a Lyon is in the Streets, Prov. 26. 13. When he is quickned to his Work, cries out, Would you have me run into the Lyon's Mouth? Would you have me undo my Self, and Family, and be swallowed up with Poverty, by neglecting my Shop to run to Church; and my own Calling, to mind God's Work? The Way of the Slothful, is an Hedge of Thorns, Prov. 15. 19. He would go if he could, if he durst; but he dare not stir, for pricking his Legs: He shall be call'd Fool or Pharisick, be Jeer'd and Laugh't at by his Old Companions, and made the Drunkard's Song, and Talk of all the Town. 'Tis safer to take Time and Leisure. Fair and Softly, goes far in a Day: That's soon enough, that's safe.

Thus Idle Men will frame Excuses, as Idle as themselves; but the Diligent doth

not so: Nay, he'll remove the Real Ones he meets with, to his Power; he'll set Hand, and Shoulder both, to work; and try in earnest, to remove Impediments.

When Men are in haste, they'll break open that Door with the Foot, which cannot be unlocked with the Hand. The *Nightingale*, that Diligent Singer, touches with her Breast against a *Thorne*, that *Sleep* may not hinder her Melody. *Aristotle*, that Diligent Student, sat with a *Brazen Ball* in his Hand, over a *Basin*, that if he chanc'd to nod, the falling Ball might alarm, and raise him to his Study. Yea, he is grieved at the very Heart, when he meets with those he cannot overcome; and Sits, or Stands, as upon Thorns, and could even bite the Chain which holds him.

Thus a Man, that is preparing to Worship God, or to set a-part a Day to retire, to spend in Devotion; in Prayer and Fasting, in Examining his Heart and Wayes, and Trying his Estate towards God. If some Occasion intervene, to hinder him, some Company surprize, and unseasonably interrupt him; it saddens, and makes him *Melancholly* all the Day; and he sends his Heart into his Closet, where he would

Real he'll would be himself; and stayes, where he is
ork; held against his Will, dumppish, and with-
edi- out an Heart: And secretly cryes out
reack against the Violence he suffers; *O wretch-
can- ed Man that I am, who shall deliver me
The from it?* And looks, and longs, and sighs
ches secretly; *When shall I come, and appear
hat before God?* Where-as the *Sloathful Man*
Ari- hugs himself, and blesses his propitious
h a Stars, that furnish him with such Excuses,
Can, to stop the Mouth of his own Conscience,
Ball or save his Credit with his Pious Neigh-
ur- bours: I was resolved fully to be there,
rt, to have done so or so; but just as I was
er- going, in came such and such, or this or
on that fell out, which hindred me that I
in could not do, what I was fully mind-
ed.

Lastly, Speed will help thy Diligence,
because it will put thee in a Readyness
to act with the *first* Opportunity; and
provide it self of all that's requisite for
doing so: It takes up its Horse over
Night, that the Morning may not slip a-
way, while he is catching. They that
furnish *Post-Horses* on the Road, keep
them ready Saddle, and with Bit in Mouth.
The Diligent *Marriner* will get all Aboard,
that he may hoyst Sail, as soon as ever
the Winds comes fair. The Diligent Ser-

vant hath his *Loynes girded*, quite ready, all his *Cloaths on*, to his very *Girdle*; which being upper-most, he puts on last; and his *Light burning*, that he may open to his Lord at the First Knock, Luk. 12. 35.

Thus these Two will mutually influence, second, and assist each other: A *Diligent Mind* will quicken thee to *Speed*, and *Speed* will many wayes promote and help thy *Diligence* in working.

Fifthly, *Industry* is another great Help to *Diligence*. *Industry* is the bending of our Minds, with all our Might, to make any thing our *Business*; and to regard it chiefly. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*. We say, a Man doth a thing *de Industria*, when he doth it for the nonce, with the settled Resolution, and full Purpose of his Heart; as *Barnabas* exhorted them of *Antioch*, *To cleave unto the Lord*, Act. 11. 23. *Set your Hearts upon all these Words, which I testify among you this Day; for it is not a vain thing*, Deut. 32. 46. When a Man makes it the Chief Design he drives at, and the Scope he aims at; and is indifferent about the Success of other Matters, provided this may succeed well.

This

This *Industry* will avoid Diversions, will not be turned out of the way; but *Seeks the way to Zion, with his Face thitherward*, Jer. 50. 5. As 'tis said of our Lord, who had set His Heart upon the Work of God, to be done at Jerusalem; Men might read it in His Face: Luk. 9. 53. *His Face was as though He would go to Jerusalem.*

It will Cast away every weight; and if it cannot, *Enatare cum sarcinis*, escape with its Pack on its Back, will quit it readily, let it sink or swim; rather than endanger Drowning with it, or for Saving of it.

Industry will Redeem the Inconveniences, brought upon it by what it could not prevent. An *Industrious Man*, if he hath been staid against his Will, will Ride the faster, and the later, to recover his Journeys End. An *Industrious Student* will eke out his Day by Candle-Light, to Redeem the Time, those *Thieves* of Time and Learning, impertinent *Visitors*, had stolen from him.

Thus, in the Work of God; How Diligent will *Industry* make a Man, when he comes to be convinc'd indeed, and sees the Greatness and Concernment of his VVork? How much he is cast behind

by former Negligence? How Ignorant a Man's Estate, of what he might, and should have learned, whilst a Child? *How far from the Kingdom of Heaven?* In what danger of being be-nighted? How will he bestir himself? Yea, he'll serve himself of all Occurrences, and hook in Advantages; *Viam aut inveniet, aut faciet*, and will make what he cannot find, to serve his great Interest; will Spiritualize, and Extract *Heaven* out of *Earth*, and press the very *World*, against its will, to serve him some way in the *Work* of *God*: And the *Clog* which is fastned to his Foot, to keep him down, if he cannot shake it off, he'll tread upon it, and turn it to a *Foot-stool*, to lift him up, and raise him higher.

Sixthly, *Courage*. The *Diligent* Man must be *Valiant*, or he will not long continue *Diligent*. The Opposition, and Discouragements, which cross the way of *Goodness*, will spoyl his *Pace*, who is not arm'd with *Zeal*, *Resolution*, and *Patience*. Shall that Man put to *Sea*, who cannot see the *Waves* toss, or hear the *Wind* bluster? They must be *Valiant for the Truth*, who will be *Diligent* to seek it, or hold it fast. *Animus, Vis, Audacia,*

adacia, comitatus Virtutis & Felicitatis:
 Courage, Hardyness, and Resolution, are
 the Guardians and Companion of Virtue
 and Happiness. The Two most Impreg-
 nable Forts against all Assaults of unkind
Fortune, are *Bearing* and *Forbearing*.
Fortitude will inspirit Diligence, and blow
 it into Flames, and make it like Coals
 of Juniper, which many Waters cannot
Quench. 'Twill mind him, that more fall
 in Flight, than Fight: And that 'tis both
 more Honourable, and more Safe, to stand
 our Ground, than run away.

This *Courage* will despise Danger, and
 dares grapple with Difficulties; and scorns
 to use the Coward's Shield, (*The Back*)
 to turn it towards them. He is never
 like to do *God's* Work to any purpose;
 that must ask the *Devil's* Leave to do
 it, or the *World's* either: But he must
 study to attain an Holy *Greatness* of Spi-
 rit, and True *Gallantry* of Mind, who re-
 solves to be Good in spite of *Satan*, and
 all his Instruments. *Resist the Devil*, (saith
St. James) and he will fly from you, 4. 7.
Whom Resist steadfast in the Faith, saith
St. Peter, 1--5. 9. *Contend earnestly for*
the Faith, saith *St. Jude*, vers. 3. *In nothing*
Terrified, saith *St. Paul*, *Phil.* 1. 27. And
 again; *Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith*,

quit you like Men, be strong, 1 Cor. 16. 13. Only take heed you presume not to stand in your own Strength, (that's the way to fall;) But, *Be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*: Take to your selves the whole *Armour of God*, that you may be able to stand against the *Wiles of the Devil*; that ye may be able to withstand, in the *Evil Day*; and having done all, to stand, Ephes. 6. 10, 11, 13.

This *Courage* will help your *Diligence*, because it will enable you to venture the *Expence* your *Work* requires of you; and dare lay out in *Confident Hope* of an *Advantageous Return*. The *Diligent Merchant* will hazard his *Goods* to *Sea*, though some have met with *Shipwracks* in a *Storm*, and others have lost all by *Pyrats*. The *Diligent Husband-man* will cast his *Seed* into the *Dirty Earth*, though some hath been *Buryed* under the *Clods*, or *Rotted* by *Inclemency of Weather*: So this *Courage* will make thee venture both *Cost and Pains*, and *Time* too, in *God's Work*; and not to *Serve Him*, with that that costs thee nothing; will not suffer thee to say, 'Tis a *Vain thing* to *serve Him*; and lost *Labour*, and *Unprofitable*, to pray to *Him*: But will boldly conclude, *In due time we shall Reap, if we*
Faint

Faint not. Again, 'Twill fortify thy Patience, to wait from Seed-time until Harvest. He that believeth, shall not make haste, Isa. 28. 16. And willing to tarry the Lord's Leisure. The Vision is for an appointed Time; but, at the End, it shall speak, and not lye: Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Habb. 2. 3. And, as we have Need of Patience, that after we have done the Will of God, we might receive the Promise: For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry, Heb. 10. 36. So this courage will help you to it, as the Apostle plainly implys, when Vers. 35. he bids them, Not cast away their Confidence, which hath great Recompence of Reward.

Lastly, 'Twill help thy Diligence, in that 'twill make thee Patient to do, as well as suffer; to undergo Labour and Pains, deny thy Self, and thy own Ease; be willing to Sweat at that Work, for which thou knowest, 'tis not too much to Bleed. *Non veniunt gratis magna bona, sed vincunt nummus labor est:* Good Things come not on Free-Cost; they are sold, Labour is the Money by which we buy them. And this will make thee Judge the Purchase Cheap, at this Price. Wel-
com

com Toyl, that leads to Rest! Welcom Poverty, that makes Rich towards God! Welcom Death, that wafts us over to Eternal Life! Yea, not only look for Labour with Contentment, but take Pleasure in Difficulties; as the *Graver* likes his Wood or Stone the better, the harder 'tis in Cutting.

Lastly, *Constancy and Perseverance*. This compleats, and fills up thy *Diligence*. When a Man holds on his way, keeps going on and on; that Man is like to finish his Journey. 'Tis a small Praise to Begin well, unless you Continue. *Ye did Run well*, Gal. 3. But, *Fools* that they were, they were *Soon weany on't*. It comes to little, when Men work by fits and starts. *Frustra fit, quod per Frustra fit*; What's done by piece-meal, will never be wholly done; or will prove but a patcht Business, at the best. Many Strokes drive home the Nail; and many Drops do wear the Stone. *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thy Hand*, Eccles. 11. 6. The Holy Fire was never to go out upon the *Altar*; and there was a Continual *Sacrifice* to be Offered upon it. *Wait on thy GOD continually*, Hos. 12. 6. The Dili-
gent

gent Man's Motto, is, *Nulla dies sine Li-
nea*: He lets no Day pass, without some
Progress.

The Old *Apologue* of the Race run by
the *Hare*, and the *Snail*, (seemingly an
unequal Match) shews what Advantage
comes by *Constancy*: The *Hare* had quick-
ly left the *Snail* so far behind, they were
out of sight of one another; But then
she fell a-grazing, basking in the *Sun*,
and at last, fell fast a-sleep: But the
Snail kept on; 'tis true, she went but
sowly, but she went Constantly, and that
won; came first to the *Goal*.

This *Constancy* intermits not. *Ma-
gne Diligentia est nunquam feriari*: 'Tis
a great peice of Diligence, to keep no
Holy-Days.

Diligence hath not an *Ague*; a Sick-
Day, and a Well-Day; an Hot Fit, and
a Cold; but keeps Uniform, and like it
self: and though it doth but jog on,
while another staves a while, it will go
its Mile. 'Tis patient Continuance in Well-
doing, and going from Strength to Strength,
and growing in Grace, which makes Men
Happy.

Constancy declines not, flags not, pre-
vents tiring. Violent Motion grows fain-
ter and fainter, till it ceases quite; but
Natu-

Natural Motion is stronger and swifter, the longer it hath lasted.

Diligence is not a *Winters-Sun*, it declines not; not *Joshua's Sun*, it stands not still; not as *Hezekiah's*, it goes not back. But as *David's*, *Psal. 19* Which is as a *Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber*, and rejoiceth as a *Strong Man* to run a *Race*. Not to go Forward, is to go Backward. If we lose but a Stroke or two, 'tis as with a *Water-Man* Rowing against the Tyde, the *Stream* carryes him back, if he force not onwards by *Arms* and *Oars*. A *Christian's Work* is not like a *Handy-Craft-man's*; he may leave, and lay it by, and find it when he returns to it, as he left it: But Ours will unravel; no Knot will hold it, but *Constant Exercise*. When you hang by your *Instrument*, and leave *Playing*, you let down the *Strings*; and 'twill take a great deal of time, to *Tune* it again. 'Twill be so with thy *Heart*. When an heavy *Bell* is *Raised*, it may be *Rung* with *Ease* and *Pleasure*; but it asks much tugging to get it up, when once it is down.

Be *Constant* therefore at thy *Work*; give not *God* cause to complain, as He did of *Ephraim*, That Thy *Goodness* is as the *Morning-Dew*; soon dried up.

Con-

Constancy knows no Period, but Perfection: Like *Cesar*; *Nil actum credens, dum quid superesset agendum*; Stops not, till it arrive at *Hercules's Pillars*; will work as long as it hath any thing to do. Nature will not leave its working, till it hath finished its work. Living Creatures cease not to grow, till they have attained full Stature, and just Dimensions: And so 'twill be with the New Creature. *Ephes. 4. 13.* It gives not over, Till it come to a *Perfect Man*, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

As good ne'r a whit, as ne'r the better; all's lost, if we hold not on till we finish. The *Stony-Ground* brought no Fruit to Perfection, *Luk. 8. 14.* but its Crop was as the *Corn on the House-top*, *Psal. 129. 7.* which withereth before it groweth up; and is made the Emblem of a great and sore Curse. And 'twas the *Unwise Builder*, that began to Build, but was not able (was not careful) to Finish, *Luk. 14. 30.* Add therefore this last Care to all the rest, To be Constant in thy Course of Diligence.

Constancy added to the rest, will make thy Diligence Compleat and Perfect; and Perfect Diligence will bring thy VVork to full Perfection. I

I now come to Conclude *All*, by Exhorting you in the Emphatical Language of the *Text*, to work your Work, to provoke you to the utmost Care and Diligence about it. And the *Motives* are so many, so obvious, and so cogent, 'tis hard to determine which to begin with: 'tis harder to know how to make an End; but hardest of all to rank them into the best Method, and most convenient Order. Give me Leave therefore, to pour them out before you, as they offer themselves on an Heap; that every one may take that which likes him best, that which affects him most: And, I beseech you, improve them to your best Advantage.

But before I come to propound particular *Motives*; Let me suggest to you, which is a weighty Consideration, That it is the General Design, and Scope of the whole *Bible*, to direct us in, or provoke us to this Work. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God; and is profitable, for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every Good Work, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.* But chiefly, to this Great Work.

And

And this will be yet more evident, if we consider it, in the several Parts. All the *Scripture* may be reduced to these *Seven Heads*: The *Doctrines*, the *Precepts*, the *Exhortations*, the *Promises*, the *Threatnings*, the *Examples*, and the *Prayers* therein Recorded. And I shall give an Instance or two, how every one of these is chiefly designed to be Subservient to this End.

This is the Total Sum, plac'd at the Foot of the Account, when the *Wiseſt* of Men had Cast it up exactly: *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter*: Fear God, and keep his *Commandments*; for this is the *Whole of Man*. For God shall bring every *Work* to Judgment, with every *Secret Thing*; whether it be *Good*, or whether it be *Evil*, Eccles. 12. 13, 14. As if he had said, When we have said all that can, all that may be said; this is, in one word, the Sum and Substance of the Whole. All the several Lines, from how different Points soever they are drawn, terminate and end in this, as their Centre: Be Diligent in God's Work.

What doth the *Doctrine* teach us, but To deny *Ungodlyneſs*, and *Worldly Luſts*; and to live *Righteouſly*, *Soberly*, and *Godly*, in this present *World*? Looking for that
Bles-

Blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. That there is a God infinitely Glorious in all Perfections, who hath made all Things for His Glory; and Man especially, to pay Him that Tribute of Glory, which is due to Him from all His Works. That Man hath an Immortal Soul, more worth than all the World: And that there is an Eternal Estate after this Life; an Heaven, and an Hell: And that Man's great Business is, to attain the One, and escape the Other: That there shall be a Resurrection both of the Just, and Unjust: That God will bring every Work to Judgment, and render to every Man according to their Works: That They who have done Good, shall go into Eternal Life; and They who have done Evil, into Everlasting Punishment: That the Good and Faithful Servant, who was Diligent in God's Works, shall receive his Master's Praise, and be Advanced: But the Wicked and Sloathful Servant, shall be Bound Hand and Foot, and cast into Utter Darkness, for his Neglecting it.

What do the Precepts enjoin us, but To Love the Lord with all our Heart and Soul, with all our Strength, and all our Might?

Might? To Serve Him with a Perfect Heart, and with a Willing Mind? To Glorify Him in our Spirits, and our Bodies: To Work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling: To Seek for Immortality, and Eternal Life, by patient Continuance in Well-doing: To Strive to Enter the Streight-Gate: To Give all Diligence to be admitted into Christ's Kingdom.

In a word, The Sum of them is, to Command us to Honour God, and be Wise to Salvation. And Thou hast Commanded us to keep these Precepts diligently, Psal. 119. 3.

As to the *Hortatory, Swasory, Argumentative* Part of the Scriptures; 'tis chiefly Imploy'd to allure us to this Work: To draw us by the Cords of a Man, or to fright us out of our Negligence, and drive us as with Whip-Cords: To Convince us by the Clearest Light: To Advise us by the Wisest Reasons: To Beseech us by the Sweetest Mercies: To Warn us by the Sorest Dangers: To Perswade us by most Cogent Arguments: To Oblige us by most Indispensible Engagements. In a word, To Prevail upon us by what-ever the Frame, and Constitution of our Nature, is capable of being moved by, to mind our Work in Earnest;

or to leave us for ever inexcusable; if we slight it, or trifle at it.

As to the *Promises*; 'Tis said in general, *That Godliness hath the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* And these *Promises* are, for Number, many: Some who have reckon'd them up, affirm them no fewer than *Six Hundred*: For Nature, Great and Precious: For Certainty, Immutable; being bottom'd on the Truth of Him, who cannot Lye. *He is Faithful, that hath Promised*: And the Sum of them all, is to give the strongest Assurance, that God will Reward them that Diligently seek Him; and that with exceeding great Rewards: A Crown of Glory, an Eternal Kingdom, an Incorruptible Inheritance, Fullness of Joy, and Everlasting Life.

And the *Threatnings*, which are as Terrible, as the *Promises* are Comfortable, the severest Wrath of God being Reveal'd from Heaven in them; are all Levell'd against those, who prefer the Devil's Work before God's, or are Remiss and Careless in it. How shall we Escape (Great Damnation) if we neglect so Great Salvation? Upon the Wicked He shall rain Snares, Fire, and Brimstone, and an Horrible Tempest; this shall be the Porti-

on of their Cup. A Cup of Trembling indeed, a Cup of Bitter and Poysonous Mixture; and yet the very Dregs of it shall be wrung out to them, and they must suck them up.

What hot and burning Thunder-bolts, are such Sentences as these charg'd with? Cursed be the Man, that doth the Work of God deceitfully: He that Believeth not, shall be Damned: Unless ye Repent, ye shall all Perish: The Ax is laid to the Root of the Tree; every Tree therefore, which bringeth not forth Good Fruit, shall be Cut down, and cast into the Fire unquenchable. If any Man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha: The Lord Jesus shall be Revealed from Heaven, with His Mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be destroyed, with Everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of His Power. And Hundreds more, which sound and signify as dreadfully as these. Thou canst not hear such Sentences pronounc't without Affrightment, unless thy Heart be like Leviathans, hard as the Nether-Mill-stone: And, How wilt thou bear the Execution, when thou comest to feel it?

The

The *Histories* and *Examples*, to which I Reduce the *Parables*, which are feigned *Histories*, the Scope of all these, is to shew God's Care of good Men, and the Pleasure He takes in those, who delight and love to do His Work with Diligence: Such as *Abel*, *Enoch*, and the Holy *Patriarchs*; *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Joseph*, *Moses*, *Joshua*, *Caleb*; and after *David*, *Jehosaphat*, *Hezekias*, *Josiah*, &c. with the Holy *Apostles*, and *Saints*, Recorded in the *New-Testament*: Or His Wrath against Wicked Men, and the Vengeance He inflicts upon Ungodly and Unfaithful Ones; such as *Cain* and *Cham*, and the *Ten Spies*, who brought up an Evil Report on the Good Land, and discouraged their Brethrens Hearts from seeking it: such as *Nadab* an *Abihu*, who offered *Strange Fire*; and were paid in their kind, with as *Strange a Fire*, which devoured them. Such as *Hophni* and *Phineas*, those Sons of *Belial*, who polluted their *Priesthood*, and caused Men to *Abhor* (Oh horrible Wickedness!) the *Lord's Service*. Such as *Judas*, *Ananias*, and *Saphira*, *Demas*, the *Foolish Virgins*, *Dives*, and the *Slothful Servant*, and abundance more; all which are written for our *Admonition*, and are as *Glasses*,
in

in which we may see what to expect. These were our Examples, to the Intent we should not lust after Evil Things, as they also lusted, 1 Cor. 10, 6. nor be Idolaters, nor Commit Fornication, nor Tempt Christ, nor Murmur, nor do the Devil's Work in any kind, nor neglect God's Work in any degree; taking heed, lest that God, who spared not them, spare not us: Nay concluding, that He who is Impartial, and no Respector of Persons, will not spare us, but if we sin like them, we shall suffer like them.

And, on the other side, let us be Encouraged by the Happy Issue of Good Men's Industry, and Faithfulness, To shew the same Diligence, to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End: and Not to be sloathful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience, inherit the Promises, Heb. 6. 11, 12. knowing that our Labour shall be no more in vain, than theirs was: But if we walk in the same Path, it will lead us to the same End; and if we mind God's Work as they did, we shall be Rewarded as they were.

Lastly, The Prayers Recorded in the Scriptures, which make a greater Part of it, than is commonly taken Notice of, have

have most of them a direct Aspect upon this Work; either to beg Opportunities for doing of it: *One thing have I desired of the Lord, That I may dwell in the House of the Lord for ever, to behold His Beauty, and to enquire in His Temple. When shall I appear in the Presence of God! My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the Courts of the Lord: My Heart, and my Flesh cryeth out for the Living God. A Day in thy Court, is better than a Thousand. I had rather be a Door-Keeper in the House of my God, &c. Or for Grace and Help to do it: Teach me to do thy Will, O my God: Teach me thy Statutes, Incline my Heart to thy Testimonies. Lead me in the Way Everlasting. Or for a gracious Acceptance of our Endeavours about it: Let my Prayer come up as Incense, and let the Lifting up my Hands be as a Morning-Sacrifice, Acceptable in thy Sight. Or Lastly, For Pardon of our Neglects, and the Imperfections which cleave to us, in performing of our VVork. The Good Lord pardon every one, that prepareth his Heart to seek God, the Lord God of his Fathers, though he be not Cleansed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary.*

But, What need I glance at any other
 Instance

Instances, when of the *Six Petitions* of that most Incomparable *Prayer*, which our *Lord Himself* hath taught us, Five of them look directly this way.

Much of our Work consists in *Prayer*; and *Prayer* is to influence all the rest of our Work: And as our *Prayer* must be Fervent, Effectual, a Working *Prayer*, a Wrestling with *God*; so must we pray, that all the rest of our Work may be: *That we be not Sloathful in Business, but Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.*

Thus you see, that one Principle End for which the *Holy Bible* was written, was to quicken and provoke us to *Diligence* in this Work of *God*: Which Consideration alone, might, if improved as it ought, be a *Spur*, a *Goad* in our sides, sufficient to excite us, and might save the pains of adding more *Motives*: Yet I shall subjoyn them briefly; and with them, shut up this whole Discourse.

The *Motives* to provoke our *Diligence* in this Work, which occur obviously, are so many, 'tis hard to couch them together in the Conclusion of a Discourse. I shall propound some, and must be forced to omit and pass by many: And though I pretend not to *Exactness*; yet to avoid

H being

being confused, I shall draw them from some distinct Heads.

First, The Nature of the Work calls for it; as being the best, Work and deserves, the most Necessary and requires, very Difficult and needs, yet very Possible; and therefore, encourages our utmost *Diligence*.

The *Motives* to be drawn from these, might be made appear very Forceable; but I forbear to urge them further, because they have been, in some Measure, toucht before.

Secondly, The Nature of Diligence may allure and move us to it: As we say of *Virtue*, It is its own Reward; so may we say of *Diligence*, It contains Incentives to it, in it self. As living Things move by an Innate Principle, as heavy Things sink downwards by their own Weight, and the Fire ascends by its own Lightness; so *Diligence* may make Men Diligent for its own sake, it is attended with so many Commendable Properties. Hear what the *Scripture* saith of it in general; *The Hand of the Diligent shall bear Rule*, Prov. 12. 24. To which agrees the *Greek Proverb*, τὸς ἐνεργίας δὲ αὐτῆς γίνετα;

All

All things are made its Servants. *The Hand of the Diligent maketh Rich*, Prov. 10. 4. *Diligentia facit fortuna*; Diligence is an Artificial Good Fortune. *Unica Natura, & Fortuna victrix*; Two things are most hardly vanquish't; *Nature*, and *Ill Luck*; yet *Diligence* will Conquer both: The Reluctances of *Nature*, and the cross Accidents of *Bad Fortune*.

The Soul of the Diligent shall be made Fat, Prov. 13. 4. *The Thoughts of the Diligent tend only to Plenteousness*, Prov. 21. 5. Seest thou a *Man Diligent in his Business*? he shall stand before *Kings*, he shall not stand before *Mean Men*, Prov. 22. 29.

In particular, There are *Three Motives* to be drawn from the Excellency of *Diligence*, to make us fall in Love with it, and to excite us to it; viz. the Consideration of what it is, 1. To our selves. 2. To others. 3. To God.

First, Be Diligent in this Work; for it will be very *Comfortable*, it will yield you the sweetest *Peace of Conscience*. There is nothing under Heaven, a Man had need be so careful to please, as his own *Conscience*; or that he should revere, and stand in so great awe of. Now, the Man who loves the *Peace*, or is a-

Fraid of the Disquiet of his own Conscience, had need be *Diligent*. Hear what St. Paul saith of it; 2 Cor. 1. 12. *This is our Rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience, That in Simplicity, and Godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in this World.*

And let me tell you, *Diligence* and *Faithfulness*, in the Work of God, is the only Thing, upon which Peace and inward Comfort do depend, and from which it ariseth. Oh, the sweet Reflections that follow the Remembrance of it! Yea, disappointed *Diligence* will yield more Peace, than successful *Sloth*: For our Comfort dependeth upon what belongs to our selves, not upon what is without us, and beyond our Power.

Duty and *Diligence*, that's our part; Success, and to give Attainment, that's God's part. And 'tis the Conscience of discharged Duty, which yields us Comfort; If it were possible for such an one to go to Hell, it would mitigate and ease the most stinging part of his Torment.

A Great Man us'd to say, He despis'd all Glory, for which he had not Laboured. *Latius est quoties tibi magno constat honestum.* One Man, who hath gain'd an Estate

state by his own Industry, takes more Pleasure in it, than Five who stumbled upon it unlook't for, and it drop't, as we say, into their Mouths.

Labour gets the best *Stomach*, and a good *Stomach* is the best *Sawce*; and so a good *Conscience* is the best *Feast*. That *Bread* is sweetest, which we Earn. *Ju- dat Labor*: Such *Bread* is not Gritty; we Eat it without Regret.

As a *Minister*, who thrusts himself into that *Office*, as a *Trade* to get Money, as a *Means* to relieve a Broken Fortune, as a *Ladder* to climb the *Pinacle* of Honour; and neither designs the *Glory* of God, nor *Good* of Souls: If this Man should by chance Convert a *Sinner*, it would yield him no *Comfort*, because his *Heart* tells him, He neither design'd it, nor desir'd it. So if another, whose Soul is set to save them who hear him; yet plough upon the *Rock*, and see not the desired *Success* upon Men; yet shall he assuredly find it with God. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be Glorious in the Eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my Strength, Isa. 49. 5.* And *St. Paul*; We are to God a sweet *Savour* in Christ, in them that Perish, and in them that are Saved, 2 Cor. 2. 15.

When earnest Endeavours hold the Plow, and hearty Desires sow the Land, the Crop shall assuredly be *Peace and Comfort*.

And *Diligence* is as *Honourable*, as *Comfortable*: Nothing reflects a greater Glory upon a Man, than *Sedulity*. And those who are too Lazy to imitate him, will yet either Admire, or Envy him; and to be Envyed is as Honourable, as to be Envious is Base.

Diligence hath such an Interest in every Man's Conscience, that it cannot but obtain Applause and Approbation; and they will Praise it, who will not Practice it. And as the prosperous Success of Good Men's Industry, is the Fuel of Bad Men's Envy; so let the Envy of such Men more and more kindle, and inflame thy *Diligence*.

Secondly, With Respect to others. A Good Man hath no greater Care nor Pleasure, next to the saving of his own Soul, than to promote the Salvation of others. 'Tis the Voice of a Cain; *Am I my Brother's Keeper?* He which Converteth another from the Error of his Wayes, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall cover a Multitude of Sins, Jam. 5. 20. And by
scat-

scattering those Clouds, shall himself Shine
as the Stars, for ever and ever, Dan
12. 3.

One Diligent Man, who is active in
the Work of God, may be as a Soul to
put Life and Spirit into a great many:
Your Zeal hath provok'd many, 1 Cor. 9.
2. 'Tis a great Blessing, to be a Blessing
to others; and he is the greatest Blef-
sing to others, who leads them to the At-
tainment of Eternal Bless'dness. No Man
doth me so much Good, as he that makes
me Good; and no Man doth so much
to make me Good, as he that gives me
good *Example*. He's most like to have
good Servants, who himself works with
them; who saith not, *Go, ye*; But, *Come
with me*, or, *Let us go*. The spreading
and flourishing Estate of Religion, was
fore-told by the Prophet Zechariah, in
Chap. 8. 21. in words very remarkable
to this purpose: *The Inhabitants of one
City shall go to another, saying, Let us go
speedily to Pray before the Lord, and to
seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go al-*
so.

The Emperour Partinax's his word was,
Militemus: A Lyon to their Captain,
would make an Army of the most fearful
Creatures fall on.

Gideon taught his Souldiers by *Exampel*:
Look on me, and it shall be, that what ye
see me do, that shall ye do, Judg. 7. 17.

Alexander us'd to March *First*: And
Q. Curtius tells us, That in storming a
 City, he was the *First* that leap't down
 off the Walls amongst the Enemies;
 which made his Souldiers even fly down
 after him.

Cesar us'd to leave his Horse, and go
 on Foot in *Hard Marches*, that the Pri-
 vate Souldiers might not be discouraged
 with those *Hardships*, in which their *Gene-*
ral bore the *First Part*. 'Twill get a
Crazy Man a Stomach, to see an *Hungry*
Man feed.

Be *Diligent* therefore in this Work of
God, that thou may'st make others so:
 And besides the Benefit which they shall
 reap, it will redound to thy Advantage. All
 the Good they do, shall in some measure be
 accounted thine, because thou wert the *Oc-*
casion of their doing of it. Remember that
 of the *Paet*: *Ergo opera ejus mea sunt*;
 All the Exploits of *Achilles's* Valour, are
 challenged by *Ulysses*, because he brought
 him to the War.

Thirdly, But all that our *Diligence* can
 be, either to our selves or others, is as
 no-

nothing, in Comparison to what it is in God's Account. For though, next to pleasing God, 'tis very considerable what Influence it may have upon our own Good, or the Good of others; yet our main Interest is, and our Business ought to be, to please Him; according to that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 9. We labour (or are Ambitious, as the Original Word signifies) that we may be Accepted of Him; because we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the Things done in His Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad.

Now, God esteems our Diligence, and Faithfulness in His Work and Service, to be our honouring and glorifying Him; as is implied in that Place; Sam. 2. 30. Him that Honoureth me, that is, Serves me Diligently; which Eli's Sons had neglected; and by that Neglect, were accounted to despise Him: So, This People honoureth me with their Lips, Matth. 15. 8. which was indeed, but a Mock-Honour, because it was no more; but had been Real Honour, if it had proceeded from their Hearts. And we Glorify God in our Bodies and Spirits, 1 Cor. 6. 20. when we dedicate both to His Service. And Christ

saith, *His Father is glorified, when His Disciples bear much Fruit, Joh. 15. 8.* which is the Effect of Diligence.

Sloth may do a little; but 'tis *Diligence*, which doth much. And it *Honours* Him many ways.

First, His Authority. 'Tis the *Honour* of a *Lord* or *Master*, to have his Servants exactly *Obedient*, and *Observant* of his Will; to go when he bids them, come when he calls them, and do what he enjoins them readily, and with all their Power; as the *Israelites* promised to *Joshua*, Chap. 1. 16, 17, 18. which was greatly for his *Honour*: So our *Diligence* in God's Work, gives Him the *Honour* of being a *Wise*, a *Righteous*, a *Gracious*, an *All-sufficient*, a *Faithful* GOD; Fit to *Rule* us, *Able* to *Protect* us, *Careful* to *Reward* us; and in all, makes His *Praise* glorious.

Secondly, It Honours His Goodness and Excellency, when we declare we prefer the Enjoyment of Him, infinitely before all other things; and make it manifest, we count it worth our utmost Cost, and Pains, and Care, (and all that *Diligence* includes) to attain it: Proclaiming openly, The *Pearl* is so Precious, 'tis impossible to purchase it too Dear. And we
make

make a good Bargain, if we get it, though it Cost our All. And if it Honour Him so much, it cannot Please Him a little; and therefore, shall not fail of a Sure, an exceeding Great, and an Everlasting Reward: For that He is a Rewarder of them that Diligently seek Him, is the First Principle, and the very Corner-Stone, on which Religion is Built, Heb. 11. 6.

The Next Head, from whence we might draw Motives to Diligence, - is the Evil of Sloath: For Contraries expel each other.

Now, Sloathfulness is out of measure, Evil. The Greek word, κακός, Malus, Wicked, as we commonly render it; in its Primary Signification, is Ignarus, Sloathful; to intimate to us, that Sloath is the Root and Mother of all Evil. Matth. 25. 26. Thou Wicked and Sloathful Servant. The Sloathful Servant, is the Wicked Servant.

Sloath is the Devil's Anvil; He Forges and Fashions all his Temptations on it: And thence produceth, and by it induceth Men into the greatest Sins and Dangers.

As of Idleness comes no Goodness; so all Evil issues from it. When the De-

vil had been cast out; yet upon return, finding the House empty, he re-entred with Seven worse than himself, Matth. 12. 44. And the Last End of that Man, is worse than the First.

If thou hast been Convinc'd, and begun to leave thy wicked Wayes, and set thy self to be *Religious*; but art Cold, Remiss, Formal, *Sloathful*, in it; the Devil will return upon thee, with a kind of *Revenge*, for quitting his Work, and making an *Escape*; and will clap more *Bolts*, and stronger *Irons* on thee. If a *Prisoner* should break the *Goal*, and as soon as he is out, stand begging at the next Door, sit tipling at the next *Ale-house*, lye down and sleep by the *High-way-side*; What would his *Escape* avail him, but cause him to be lock't up faster, and be watch't more narrowly, and be us'd more hardly? Tho thou hast escaped from them who live in *Errour*, and beest of the *True Religion*, and hast a *Form of Godliness*, and resolvest to become a good Man; yet if thou be either afraid or ashamed to be *Zealous* in *Religion*, wilt not add the *Power* to the *Form*, wilt not be true in thy Practice, of thy true Principles, it will avail thee nothing. Read with Attention, 2 *Pet.* 2. Three last Verses;

ses; If after they have escaped the Pollution of the World, through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; they are again intangled therein, and overcome: The Later End is worse with them, than the Beginning: For it had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered to them. But it is happened to them according to the True Proverb: The Dog is turned to his own Vomit again; and the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the Mire.

I will touch the *Evil of Sloath*, as I did the *Good of Diligence*, with respect to Our Selves, to Others, to G O D.

First, 'Tis most certainly *Mischievous*, yea *Destructive* to thy Self, to be *Sloathful* in Religion, and deal in God's Work with a *slack Hand*. Ther's a Passage in Prov. 18. 9. which, well considered, may mightily awaken us. *He that is sloathful in his Work, is Brother to him that is a great Waster.* Let us understand this, as a *Spiritual Aphorism*, with respect to the Work which concerns our Souls; and then it

it implies thus much: By the *great Waster*, is to be understood a *Flagitious Wicked sinner*; who lives in Sin which waste *Conscience*, as the *Schools* expressly call gross scandalous Sins, committed against common Light. *Peccata vastantia Conscientiam*: Blasphemy, Swearing, Damning, Whoredom, Debauchery, Malicious Slandering those who are Good, &c. By the *Slothful in Business*, is meant one, who though he be free from Prophaness, and the open Excesses of the *great Waster*; yet hath no Heart, no Life, no Love, no Care to be Religious in good Earnest, or mind the Work of God; but goes on a Dreaming Pace, performs a few Customary Duties of Religion, for fashion-sake. To be *Brother* to one, signifies to be in the same Condition, born to the same Inheritance, Children of the same Father, Members of the same Family.

Now, the Result of this is to let us know, that the Condition of both these is alike Miserable, alike Hateful to God, and Dangerous to themselves; alike I mean for Kind, though it may be not for Degrees: He that is busy in the *Devil's* Work, and he that is *slothful* in *GOD's* Work: The *Tree* which brings forth *bad Fruit*, and the *Tree* which bears no good *Fruit*:

Fruit : He that is against GOD, and he that is not for GOD : He that *Prophanes* His Name, and he that will not *Glorify* His Name ; are both of the *Black Regiment*, though they may be of different Degrees : And their Pay may be more or less ; yet they have the same *Quarters* provided for them : The *One* may go to *Hell* with more Infamy, entering the *Fore-gate*, in the View of all Men ; the *Other* may slip in at the *Back Door*, with less Noise or Notice ; but they'll certainly meet there : They are own Brothers, and have *Title* to the same *Inheritance* : Though the *Spiritual Hector*, which hath cast off all Restraints, and Sense of GOD, may be admitted to an *Elder Brother's*, that is, a *Double Portion* ; yet the *Other* will undoubtedly come in for a *Child's Portion* also.

Now, this *Negligence* will hurt, yea ruin Men, Two wayes ; *Naturally* or *Necessarily*, *Morally* or *Meritoriously*.

First, The *Natural* and *Necessary* Consequent of *Negligence*, is *Poverty* and *Want* : The *Desire* of the *Stout* killeth him ; for his *Hands* refuse to *Labour*. The *Sluggard* will not *Plough*, by reason of *Cold* ; therefore shall he beg in *Harvest*, and have nothing.

The

The Grasshopper, which sings away its Summer, dyes for Hunger when the Cold comes. I went by the Field of the Sloathful, and by the Vinyard of the Man void of Understanding: And lo, it was grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof; and the Stone-wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received Instruction: Yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little Folding of the Hands to sleep. So shall thy Poverty come as one that Travelleth, and thy Want as an Armed Man, Prov. 25. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.

Secondly, It ruins Meritoriously: It provokes God to destroy, as a Just Punishment of Disobedience to the Command that requires Diligence. If any Man will not Labour, neither let him Eat, 2 Thes. 3. 10. He deserves to be burned, who will not hasten out of that House which is on Fire about him. There is a dreadful Place, Jer. 48. 10. Cursed be he that doth the Work of God deceitfully. And Mal. 1. is so large, and so full to this purpose, as nothing can be more: 'Tis too large to Transcribe; I intreat you to turn your Bibles, and read it considerately to the End; especially from the

the *Sixth Verse* : It concludes thus, after Rebuking them for despising His Name, in offering polluted *Bread*, and the *Blind*, and the *Lame* ; with many other Expressions, which imply *Neglect* and *Sleightiness* in his Service : *Vers. 14. But Cur- sed be the Deceiver, which hath in his Flock a Male, and Voweth and Sacrificeth to the Lord a Corrupt Thing.* As much as to say, who had Opportunities and Abilities to serve God better ; yet through *Sloth* and *Negligence*, presumes to serve Him worse. The *Servant* who hid his *Talent* in a *Napkin*, when he should have traded for his Master with it, is first punish't with the Loss of his *Talent* ; *Take the Talent from him* : And then with sorer Vengeance, *Bind him Hand and Foot, and cast him into utter Darkness.* Not only those who rob'd and spoyl'd them ; but those who neglected to Relieve Christ in His poor Members, *Shall go away into Everlasting Punishment.* And other Negligence in what God requires, will meet with a Proportionable Doom.

Secondly, *Negligence* in God's Work, casts a great Damp upon others, weakens their Hands, & discourageth their Hearts : The World is exceeding prone to be taken

ken with such *Examples* as gratify their Lusts, and indulge their Ease.

Now when Men, who are too ready of themselves to be Slack and Remiss in these Matters, see you, who are their Betters, Sleight and Sloathful; How will they argue from, and improve so bad a Precedent? and say to themselves, 'Tis safe to do so; as the *Apostle* argues in another Case, 1 Cor. 8. 10. *Shall not the Conscience of him that is weak, be emboldened? So may I in this; Shall not others be imboldned to be as Careless as thy self? And so thou wilt destroy thy Brother, for whom Christ Dyed: And sin against his Soul, and sin against Christ, and against thy own Life, all at once.*

And I appeal to your own Consciences, What is it that makes *Forwardness* and *Zeal* in Religion, and *Diligence* in God's Work, be look't upon with so shy and suspicious an Eye in most places? Yea, with Disgrace, Reproach, and Scorn, as if it were more ado than needs? But the general *Coldness* and *Deadness* of Men, call'd *Christians*, and professing themselves the Servants of the true God: And if any do tacitely reprove them, by being more forward, they'll Revenge themselves with the *Lowdest Reproaches*, and *Infamous Reflections*

flections of Affectation of Singularity, Hypocrisy, Hair-brain'd Zeal, and what not: And so, when their Spiritual Interest urges them, and Conscience urges them to Diligence in their Great Work, they dare not endeavour it for fear of Jeers & Scorns, and being laugh'd at for their Singularity; and as Men, who would pretend to be wiser than their Neighbour; and are either cog'd out of the Power of Godlyness, by the flattering Example of the Lazy; or Bug-bear'd out on't, by the Reproaches of Singularity. But Woe be to him, by whom such Offences come! It were better a Mill-stone were hang'd about his Neck, and he were cast into the Sea, than that he should offend one Little One, who believes in Christ, St. Matth. 18. 6.

If it be so dangerous to be Partaker of other Mens Sins, What is it to be the Author of other Men's Sins! And if no Murderer of Men's Bodies hath Eternal Life, What shall become of those who thus Murder Souls! Consider our Lord's Words; St. Matth. 23. 13. *Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! Ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men; for ye neither go in your selves, and them that were entring in, ye hinder.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Thy Sloathfulness in God's Work, greatly dishonours Him; not merely as it disobeys Him, but by the Sinister Reflections it makes upon Him; as if His Work deserved no better. 'Tis Natural to us, when we see any Design pursued Remissly, to conclude, 'Tis not worth the while to bestow more Pains about it; and consequently, it greatly provokes him: For *He that despiseth Him, shall be lightly esteemed.* God regards the manner of our Duties, as much, nay more than the Duties themselves: 'Tis not the doing Good pleaseth Him so much, as the doing of it Well: Not only Eat, but so Eat; Let a Man Examine himself, and so let him Eat: Not only Read, Pray, Hear; but Read Considerately, Hear Attentively, Pray Earnestly: So Read, so Pray, so Hear; or else thou may'st do all these more to thy Hurt, than Benefit: As the Apostle speaks of some Mens Eating and Drinking their own Damnation. Not only serve God; but Keep thy Heart diligently, when thou art about it: And be not Sloathful in this Business; but Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. 12. 11. The Luke-warm, is the worst Temper; God will spew such out of His Mouth, Rev. 3. 16.

The

The *Fourth Head*, from whence we may draw *Motives* to excite our *Diligence* in this *Work*, is by making *Comparisons*: And this will yield us several very *Co-gent Ones*.

First, Compare *God* and the *World*, and thy *Self* with thy *Self*, in reference to These; thy *Worldly Self*, with thy *Religious Self*: And Alas! What vast odds appears, even at the first *View*? What are all the *Things*, yea and all the *Men* of the *World* put together, in *Comparison* of Him? To whom will ye liken *God*? or, What *Likeness* will ye compare to Him? Behold, the *Nations* are as the *Drop* of a *Bucket*; and are counted as the *small Dust* of the *Ballance*; he taketh up the *Isles*, as a very little *Thing*: All *Nations* before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and *Vanity*, Isa. 40. 15, 17, 18. What miserable *Comforters*, what deceitful *Helpers*, when their *Breath* goeth out, and their *Thoughts* perish? Yea, before that, while they *Live*, and are in their *Best Estate*, they are altogether *Vanity*. How *Weak*, how *False*, how soon *Weary*, are all the *Men* in the *World*, in *Comparison* of the *All-mighty*, *All-wise*, *All-sufficient*, most *Faithful*

ful, and Unchangeable *God*? How Empty, how Unsatisfying, how Perishing, how Deceitful, what Lying, and Vexing Vanities, are all the Honours, Profits, Pleasures, thou can'st pursue, or hope to catch; in *Comparison* of Him, who is the only full, pleasing, satisfying *Object* of the Heart of Man?

Now *argue* hence: If Men, if thy Self yet seek for these, with so great Warmth and Heat, with so much Life and Vigour; and Rise up Early, and Sit up Late, and Wear out themselves, and Labour as in the Fire, to grasp these *Shadows*: What Zeal, what *Diligence* should we use in the Work of *God*, that we may please Him, and enjoy Him for Ever?

Solomon observes, That *Many* seek the *Rulers Favour*, Prov. 29. 26. How will Men fawn, and flatter, and crouch, and debase themselves, and comply with the Humours, nay the Lusts of them, who can Advance them? Though the *Psalmist*, who was a *Mighty Prince* himself, bids us not to Put Confidence in Princes, nor in the Sons of Men, in whom is no Help, Psal. 146. 3. And giving the Reason for it ver. 4. directs us ver. 5. shewing us in the Enjoyment of whom true Happiness Consists. Happy is the Man, who hath the
God

God of Jacob for his Help, whose Hope is the Lord his God, who made Heaven and Earth, and keepeth Truth for ever. And *Psal.* 118. 8, 9. It is better to Trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in Man; than to put Confidence in the Greatest, or the Best of Men. And if Men will be so Diligent to please a Landlord, a Justice, a Master, or a Father; How much more Careful should we be to please the Great God of Heaven? And the Apostle argues *Heb.* 12. 9. We have had Fathers of our Flesh, and we gave them Reverence; Shall we not much rather be in Subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? And God himself, *Mal.* 1. 6.

And so, for the Things of the World: No Study or Contrivance of the Head, no Labour nor Travel of the Hands or Feet, is thought too much: How did Jacob Serve for Rachel? See how he describes his Diligence, *Gen.* 31. 40. In the Day the Drought consumed me, and the Frost by Night; and my Sleep departed from mine Eyes. And 'tis easier to find an Hundred following him in this, than Two or Three in his Wrestling with God, and not letting Him go till they obtain the Blessing: Most Men being serious about Trifles, and only trifling and dallying about

bout this Serious Work, *The One Thing necessary: Spending their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfies not, Isa. 55. 2. For-saking the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewing out broken Cisterns, that will hold no Water, Jer. 2. 13. Being wise to do Evil, but void of Knowledge to do Good.*

Compare thy Self with other Men: How many Younger than thy Self, have got more Knowledge? How many Poorer than thy Self, can spare more Time to Read, and Meditate, and Pray? How many of weaker Parts, and under smaller Helps, and intrusted with fewer Talents; yet have far out-stript thee, in your common Master's Work: And thou wilt say, 'Tis like; 'tis well done of them: And thy Judgment approves and praises them.

For shame then Practise thy Self, what thou canst not but applaud in Others: Yea, let Shame (to find thy Self out-stript by so Many, that were once behind thee, and are so still in many Respects) quicken thee to double thy Diligence, till thou recover and over-take them; yea get again before them.

Again: Compare thy Self with GOD, if thou be not afraid to entertain a Thought
of

of so unequal a Comparison. (*Lord, What is Man!*) a Worm, a Clod, a Bubble, a Shadow: Yea, *Man in Honour is like the Beast that perisheth, and in his best Estate is altogether Vanity.* And yet, as Mean and Inconsiderable a Thing as thou art, thou standest upon it, thou wilt have it thus and thus; and thy Will must be done with Diligence, and thy Work with Care, and with Exactness; and art presently upbraiding those about thee, for the least Neglect, with, *What do I keep you for?* And wilt rid thy self of such unprofitable Incumbrances; and wilt not retain an Idle, Faithless Servant in thy Family; a Jade in thy Stable, a Barren or Unthrifty Creature, amongst thy Cattle; or a Fruitless Tree in thy Orchard. And, How darest thou be such, towards the Great King of all the Earth, as thou wilt not suffer any of thy Fellow-Creatures to be towards thy self; who art so far below Him, so Inconsiderable a Nothing, in comparison of Him?

Once more, Compare the Sweet and Easy Indulgence the Gospel hath provided for thee, in the Work of God, with the Hard Service imposed and exacted under the Law; and the Graciously Assistance offer'd and communicated under

this Dispensation, with the little *Help* afforded then. How Chargeable and Costly were the *Sacrifices*? How Long and Tiring the Journey's up to *Jerusalem*? How Insupportable the Yoke of those Observances? And, How small the *Aids* afforded? What would'st thou have done then, if thou sickest, if thou grudgest, if thou repine at what is now expected, and shall be accepted. As *Naaman's* Servants said wisely to their Master. *My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing, Wouldst thou not have done it?* How much more, when he saith unto thee, *Wash and be Clean*, 2 King. 5. 13? If God, if Christ, had bid thee do some *Harder Work* Wouldst thou not do it, to save thy *Soul* for ever? How much more, when he hath made the *Way* more *Easie*, than of Old; and offer'd and assur'd greater *Help* than then, to enable thee to do it.

Lastly, Compare thy *Work* for the *True God*, with what *Idolaters* and *Hypocrites* perform to *False Ones*, or to the *True One* Falsly. That you may be moved to *Jealousie*, with those which are not a *People*, and provoked by a *Foolish Nation*, Deut. 32. 21. How do the *Worshippers* of *Baal* cry whole *Dayes*, and Cut themselves

selves with Knives and Lances, till the Blood gushes out? How do the Profelytes of Rome Whip themselves, pour out their Money to their wily Priests, which make Merchandize of them, for Masses, Indulgences, &c.? How do they Lavish out Gold, and Impoverish themselves and Families, to enrich the Shrines of Dead and Dumb Idols; and undergo hard Penances, and tedious Pilgrimages? And all in vain, led only by a False Opinion of Meriting, by what God will despise. And, How Profuse will Hypocrites be? Thousands of Rams, and Ten Thousand Rivers of Oyl: Yea, what is Dearer still, The First-Born of their Bodies, for the Sin of their Souls, Mich. 6. How! Shall not only the Queen of the South, but the Great Whore of the West, Rise up against you, and Condemn your Sloath?

Fifthly, We are under many Great and Indispensible Engagements to Diligence, in this Work. We are bound in Conscience, and 'tis our Duty that we must. We are bound in Gratitude, upon receiving so many Talents and Opportunities, by which we may. We are bound in point of Interest, our own Safety and

Happiness depends upon it; and 'tis our *Wisdom*, if we will thus work. A word of every one of these, may serve.

First, 'Tis our *Duty*, and we are bound by His *Authority*, who is our *Lord*. He hath commanded us to keep His *Precepts* diligently. The *First and Great Command*, is, To Love the *Lord* our *God*, (which is the very *Soul and Life* of this *Work*) with all our *Heart*, and all our *Soul*; with all our *Might*, and all our *Strength*. Every Step in this *Way*, must be trodden heedfully: See that ye *Walk* circumspectly; not as *Fools*, but as *Wise*: Not at Peradventure. Keep thy *Heart* with all *Diligence*, Prov. 4. 24. *Joshua's* Words are very pressing, Chap. 22. 5. Take diligent heed to do the *Commandment*, and the *Law* which *Moses* the *Servant* of the *Lord* charged you, to Love the *Lord* your *God*, and to *Walk* in all His *Wayes*, and to Keep His *Commandments*, and to Cleave to Him, and to Serve Him with all your *Heart*, and all your *Soul*.

As we must agree quickly with our *Adversary*; so we must give *Diligence* to be delivered from him. We must not only *Work* at, but *Work* out our own *Salvation*. As we must *Receive* the *Word* with all readiness; so we must take most *Diligent*

gent heed to the Things we have heard; lest at any time we let them slip, Heb. 2. 1. We must be Zealous, and Repent: We must Believe with all our Hearts: We must Love Christ in Sincerity: We must Obey from the Heart the Form of Doctrine delivered to us.

In a word; We must do all God's Work, as in His Sight, remembering He stands by, and looks on; and, as near as may be, as the Saints and Angels do in Heaven: And to be sure, that is Diligently indeed. 'Tis our Duty.

Secondly, We are bound by Gratitude and Ingenuity; which Bond, like Silken ones, should be the Stronger for its Softness. If a Friend lend Money, or a Stock to Trade with, which he that wanteth cannot Trade at all; this is a great Engagement upon those who Receive it, to Trade the more Industriously. Thus God hath dealt with us; hath Trusted us with Talents, and with Opportunities, and expects the best Improvement of them. Why is there a Price put in the Hand of a Fool, to get Wisdom, seeing he hath no Heart there-to, Prov. 17. 16?

When God sets up His Tabernacle, 'tis to this End, That Men may seek him in it, Act. 15. 16, 17. The Kindness of that

Benefactor is abused basely, who furnisheth him with Tools, who will not use them.

Leave, Opportunity, Help to do our Work, is as great an *Obligation*, as can be laid on any Ingenuous Man, to make him *Diligent*. How oft doth *Christ* say, *He that hath Ears to Hear, let him Hear*, Luk. 8. 8. 10. As we commonly ask, *What did God give you Eyes, and Ears, and Hands for; but to See, and Hear, and Work?*

Thirdly, We are bound by *Interest*, and 'tis our *Wisdom* to Promote this Work; for the *Advantage* redounds to our selves. *If thou be Wise, thou shalt be Wise for thy self; and if thou Scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*, Prov. 9. 12. God sets us not to Work, as *Pharaoh* did the *Israelites*, to Make Brick for his Buildings: But we work for our selves, though He sets us our Work; and we shall Suffer Loss, if our Work abide not. *Blessed is the Man that heareth Me, watching daily at My Gates, waiting at the Posts of My Doors: For whoso findeth Me, findeth Life, and shall obtain Favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Me, wrangeth his own Soul; all they that hate Me, love Death*, Prov. 7. 34, 35, 36.

Men are greatly *Ambitious*, to be accounted *Wise*; and 'tis the Greatest *Wisdom*, to be *Wise* to Salvation: And so is that Man, who understands his own *Interest* so well, as to do his *Work* with *Diligence*. Do it therefore so, and it *Shall* be thy *Wisdom* and *Understanding*, Deut. 4. 6.

The *Last Head*, from which I shall draw *Motives* to excite your *Diligence*, is *Example*; Than which, none can be more fit and proper, in this Subject: Man is naturally prone to be led by *Example*, especially in *Working*; and the Principal Force of the *Text*, depends upon our *Saviour's* urging our *Duty* by His own *Example*; *I must work the Works of Him that sent Me.*

Now, we have great Variety and Multitude of *Examples*, to draw us, yea provoke us unto *Diligence*; no less than the whole *Creation*; nay more: For all the *Creatures*, and the *Creator* Himself, are our *Examples* herein. God Himself is *Purus Actus*, as the *Schools* call Him; a *Spirit*, an Active, Quickening Spirit; all Life, Activity, and Motion; who is Eternally Busy, never Idle, Unemploy'd, or Acting Wearily or Faintly. *My Fa-*

ther hitherto Worketh, and I Work, saith our Lord. And the whole Creation, like its Maker, had naturally no Sloathful Piece, 'till Sin and Vice had taught them to be such; and even since, the Worst are Busie in their Wickedness, and Diligent in doing Mischief; which should Shame us, and Provoke us, to out-do them in our Better Work.

But I'll briefly touch this *Argument* by Parts. And,

First, The Inanimate Creatures. What David calls upon them to do, Psal. 148. they do most Diligently; Obey the Law of their Creation, - Fulfil their Maker's Will, and Do the Work He made them for. The Sun, the Moon, and Stars, and all the Host of Heaven, give both their Light and Influence; move Swiftly, Regularly, and Constantly; measure to us Time and Seasons, by their Equal Revolutions; and never stop, unless He bids them; and yet one Word of His, checks them in their full Career; and they Stand, or go Back, as He commands them. The Wind, the Rain, the Hail, the Snow, the Storms and Tempests, and all the Meteors do the like. The Sea Ebbs and Flows, raises its Billows, or smooths its Face at His least Beck. The Earth gives forth its

its Strength, for *Man* and *Beast*; rests, and is quiet, or Quakes and Trembles at His Word; yea, Cleaves asunder under those He bids it swallow down. The *Trees* bring for their *Fruit*, or cast their *Leaves*, at His Appointment; and know their *Spring* and *Autumn*. And all the *Brut* Creatures are Strangers to *Sloth*, and Enemies to *Disobedience*; but Patterns of *Diligence* and *Wisdom*. The *Ant*, the *Turtle*, the *Crane*, and the *Swallow*, keep their *Seasons*, and do their *Work* in them; and the Stolid *Ox*, and Stupid *Ass*, know their Owner, and their *Master's Crib*; and will wear His *Yoke*, who Feeds them.

Secondly, The Devil and Wicked Men: For, *Fas est ab hoste Doceri*: Satan Compasses the Earth, and walks about in it, goes about continually seeking whom he may devour; is alwayes contriving *Adversities* by his Wiles, Depths, Methods, Stratagems; or acting it by Temptations, which he multiplies one after another; that if one succeed not, another may; as he did with our Lord Himself, for Forty Days together. *Beelzebub*, the God of Flies, is more importunate than any Fly, desiring to winnow, even the Disciples, as Wheat is winnowed: To sift Men to the Bran;

a Phrase importing utmost Diligence: Always restless, never weary; and gives not over till Restrain'd, and Chain'd up by a strong Hand. And Wicked Men are like him: They accomplish a Diligent Search, they weary themselves to commit Iniquity; and cannot Sleep, unless they cause some to fall. Commit their Wickednesses with both Hands greedily. And take more pains to go to Hell, than would suffice, if well imploy'd, to bring them to Heaven.

And Oh! What a Shame is it, that Satan's Envy against God; and Malice against Man, should make him more Diligent in his Work; than our Zeal for God's Glory, and Love to our own Souls, can make us in the Work of God, for our own Salvation! And, What pity is it, that so bad a Master as wicked Men serve, should be served with more Vigor, Industry, and Life, than the Lord of Glory, whom we pretend to serve, and profess we believe to be the Best of Masters.

Thirdly, The Saints and Angels in Heaven. They Cease not Day or Night, to give Glory to Him that sits upon the Throne; crying Holy, Holy, Holy! The Cherubims, in Ezekiel's Vision, were represented by
Wheels;

Wheels; and there, and alwayes, having Wings, both Emblems of Velocity, and Speedy Diligence.

And, as they be set for our *Patterns* in the *Lord's-Prayer*, while we are taught to pray for *Grace, To do God's Will on Earth, as it is done in Heaven*, we either ask we know not what, or we do but mock *God*, if we endeavour not to *Serve Him* with the same *Diligence*, as near as we can attain it; where-with the *Host of Heaven* serve Him constantly.

Lastly, The Example of God Himself, Blessed for ever, whom we are so oft required to imitate: Be ye Holy, for I am Holy: Be ye Perfect, as your Father in Heaven is Perfect. This beyond all, should constrain us to shew forth our utmost *Diligence*. Shall *God* be so Sollicitous to promote our *Salvation*? and, Shall we sleight and despise it, as if it were not worth Regarding? *God the Father*, imploy'd His Blessed Thoughts about it, from all *Eternity*; devising Means to bring home His Banished; that they should not be Expelled from Himself; to Reconcile His Mercy, and His Justice; to Punish the Sin, and Spare the Sinner; and made all his Glory pass before Him, in the Accomplishment of it; display'd all His Attributes, in their brightest Lustre; and, in a word, gave His Son, the Dearly Beloved of His Soul, in whom He took Infinite and Everlasting pleasure, to be made a Man, and then to be made a Curse. And *God (the Son)* came down from Heaven, for us Men, and for our *Salvation*. And having done so, spent His time in the World, according

ing to the Ends for which He came into it; which was to *Glorify His Father*, do His Will, and do Good to the Souls and Bodies of Men: and He did it all with a Zeal, that even Consumed and Eat Him up; and made the Foolish World say, He was *Mad*, or *Beside Himself*; as they are ready to do of all that follow Him. And at last, after a Life spent in preaching whole Dayes, and praying whole Nights, and Working mighty Miracles; He Finish't all with a *Willing Obedience* to the most painful, shameful, and accursed Death; and even now He is in Heaven, He is as *Diligent* as ever, making *Intercession* without *Intermission*; and watching and ordering all things for the Good of those, who shall be *Heirs of Salvation*.

And the most Holy, and most Blessed Spirit, is as *busie* and *sedulous*, as either of the Former; knocking, calling, striving, warning, wooing Sinners, to return to God, to be so Wise as to be contented to be Happy upon God's Terms; which, in one word are, That you *Work out your Salvation* with *Fear and Trembling*; and improve your Seasons with meet *Diligence*, while you have them: *Working while 'tis Day, before that Night over-take you, in which no Man can Work*: Which, that we all do, The Good Lord vouchsafe us that Grace and Wisdom, which may Assist us, and Direct us, to do accordingly. Amen.

FINIS.

1

A
DISCOURSE
SHEWING

The sinfulness and danger of unfruitfulness under the Gospel, containing the substance of some Sermons Preached upon

St. Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9:

A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why tumbereth it the ground?

And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

A S time is measured out to us, by the revolution of days, and months, and years; so is Gods patience magnified towards us, by multiplying the returns of them. And as his Patience is

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2 . *The Sinfulness and Danger*

magnified, so is our *Account* increased, and *Impenitency* aggravated according to the number of the portions of *time* which pass over us : and the more we have wasted, and sent home empty to him, that expected fruit from us in them all, the more we have cause to expect and fear that every next, and new one, should be our last : for God will not always bear the *disappointment* of his expectation, but *tho* he bear long, will not forbear always, but will at length *curse* to a with'ring, or cut down for burning, the barren Tree, which bears either none, or no good Fruit, year after year. This consideration hath induced mee, in the beginning of another year, to chuse this *Parable* to discourse of, to press you with all the earnestness I can, after so many years, of provoking unfruitfulness, to tempt Gods *long-suffering* no longer, by impenitency and barrenness under the Gospel, lest if being let alone this year also, you continue only incumbrances of Gods *Vineyard* : He continue no longer to spare you, nor Christ to interceed for you, that you may be spared, nor good men be able to prevail for you, nor your own *Consciences* have any *plea* left ; but that ye be cut off, without pittie on Gods part, without

out remedy on mans, and without excuse on you own.

There is not a place in all the Holy Scriptures, wherein Repentance, and that both sound and speedy, is more vehemently urged, and more emphatically enforced than the beginning of this Chapter. For as those who heard our Lord urge the similitude of the Creditor and Debtor, (laid down in the two last verses of the preceeding Chapter,) against procrastination; may seem to have taken occasion thence, to tell him the story of the Galileans, Whose blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices; so our Lord takes occasion further to improve that his Doctrine against neglect and deferring Repentance by applying that story now told him, and another of eighteen men on whom the Tower of Siloam had fallen and destroyed them: which were both true and real Stories, of things which had actually, and lately hapned: and were fresh in all mens memories and mouths.

Now these being very awakning examples, and startling instances of sudden and surprizing Judgments. Our Saviour according to his great wisdom and faithfulness, will not let slip so fair an opportunity to press his hearers from them, to

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speedy and sincere *Repentance*. As if he had said, these were not greater, not more flagitious sinners, than their Neighbours, no, nor then your selves: and yet these things, you hear and know, hapned unto them, and as bad, or worse, may happen unto you, nay will, unless you *Repent*: and now especially, since God hath given them to be such warnings to awaken you; *If you do not now repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. Your impenitency, aggravated by slighting such an alarm as their fall gives you; will provoke God to meet with you some way or other; and if in any case he cut you off before you have *Repented* truly, you perish unavoidably, and that for ever.

Little did the *Galileans* think, when they went to offer *Sacrifice*, they should themselves be made a *Sacrifice*. Little did the *Eighteenmen* who were in or nigh the *Tower of Siloam*, well and safe, and secure from fear, think to be cruelt to death in a moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, and yet these things besel them both.

And so may it be with any of you: when you are at *Church*, when you are busie in the Streets, when you are safe and merry in your Houses, some unthought of, some unsuspected calamity, may suddenly

Of Defering Repentance. 5

denly surprize: therefore Repent speedily that you may be always ready, for all events, and to meet what ever Message Gods Providence may send.

But of such importance is this duty, and so earnest is our Lord to fasten this nail surely; that he reiterates his stroaks to drive it home, and therefore adds this Parable, after the wise Application and improvement he had made of two real stories so apposite to his purpose. And this is *Historia ficta*, though not a real History of things actually done, yet a Picture of things usual, and likely to be done: which strikes the Phansie, and by that the Judgment and Conscience, with a quicker and more smart stroak, than what is delivered in plain those most expressive and significant words.

Methinks upon the reading of this Parable of the Fig-tree, we may cry out as the Holy Apostle, doth upon the writing the like Parable of the Olive-tree, Rom, xi. 22. Behold the goodness and severity of God: but with this two-fold difference.

First, There they were both executed, here Mercy and Goodness only is exercised, Justice and Severity only threatened.

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Secondly, There they are imployed upon several Subjects, or persons: Goodness on the *Gentiles*, Severity on the *Jews*: here both are conversant about the same object.

First, Behold his *Goodness* in several respects. 1. 'Tis great Mercy to be Planted so advantageously in the *Vineyard*, in so Fat and well prepared a Soyl: and so well Fenc'd and secured from annoyance, both of Beasts and Weather, by an Hedg and by a Wall. 2. 'Tis Mercy to be forborn so long, and suffered to stand year after year, notwithstanding its unfruitfulness. 3. 'Tis Mercy to have the *Intercession* of the Dreller of the *Vineyard* and to have that Intercession prevalent and accepted for it; and thereupon to allow it more time, and more pains and cost to be bestowed upon it, in *digging* and *dresssing* and *dunging* of it.

Secondly, behold his *Justice* too. 1. 'Tis just with God to expect *Fruit* of a *Tree* so Planted, to come with expectation of it, to call it to accompt, and take severe notice of its unfruitfulness. 2. 'Tis just to upbraid it and reproach it, for *Cumbring the ground*, and to pass Sentence against it, to *cut it down*, for so long and so often disappointing of his desires.

3. 'Tis

3. 'Tis just to proceed to actual cutting down without remedy or pity, after more pains and cost bestowed upon it in vain, and to no purpose.

We cannot have a better *Commentary* upon this *Text* than the seven first *Verses* of the fifth *Chapter* of *Isaiab*. I will therefore transcribe them. Now will I sing to my well beloved a *Song* of my beloved, touching his vineyard: my well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choiest Vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth Grapes; and it brought forth wild Grapes. And now O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge I pray you betwixt me and my Vineyard: What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked for Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes? And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the Wall, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it wast, it shall not be pruned nor digged: but there shall come up briars and thorns, I will also command the Clouds that they Rain no Rain

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upon it. For the *Vineyard* of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant Plant: and he looked for Judgment, but behold oppression, and for Righteousness, but behold a cry. I shall leave it to your selves to make the *Paralel*, and such observations, as may help you by one, to understand the other. And I will now proceed to the easiest and plainest explication of the *Parable* that possibly I can. And let us divide it into its parts, that they may be explained in the better order. Of the *four verses* of which it consists, the two former, six and seven, belong to the Lord of the *Vineyard*: and the two latter, eight and nine, belong to the *Dresser* of the *Vineyard*, of those two which relate to the Lord of the *Vineyard*, the former tells you what he did, the latter what he said. Of the two which relate to the *Dresser* of the *Vineyard*, the former contains his Intercession that it may be spared: the latter his Concession that it should be destroyed, upon supposition of its continuing unfruitful.

I shall now explain them in this order I have named them, and all as concisely as I may, and with respect to the Application which I chiefly intend.

In the sixth we have four things to be opened.

opened. 1. Who this Lord of the Vineyard is, and the three things he did. 1. Had a Fig-tree Planted in his Vineyard. 2. Came to seek Fruit of it. 3. Found none. First the certain man, the Lord of the Vineyard is the Lord *Jehovah*, the great God possessor of Heaven and Earth, as appears by *Is. v. 7.* before named, and *Pf. lxxx.* from the seven to the sixteenth very fully, and by *St. Matth. xx. 1.* and *xxi. 33, 41.* The Vineyard is, in the primary intention of the Parable, the Synagogue, the Church of the Jews, which God had planted with so much love and care, as is declared in the forenamed Psalm *lxxx. 7, 8.* But by just Analogy and proportion, is the Catholick Church of God under the Gospel. And any particular Church, in any Nation, to which God doth vouchsafe his Gospel, Word and Ordinances.

The Fig-tree planted in this Vineyard, is any particular Church, with respect to the Catholick or Universal Church, of which it is a Part or Member. Or any particular person, man or woman, with respect to that particular Church, in which he lives, and partakes of Christs Institutions.

The Fig-tree is a Tree of a Fruit-bearing kind, Naturally apt to bring forth sweet and good Fruit, *Judg. ix. 11.* not

barren by Nature, like an *Asp*, or *Elm* or *Willow*: nor bad Fruit as the *Thorn*, of which men expect not to gather sweet Fruit, *Luke vi. 44.* Of thorns men do not gather figs. So man endued with Reason, Conscience, Will, Affections, is capable to know, chuse, love, fear, serve God; and obey him.

Now that it may not seem incongruous, to speak of a *Fig-tree* (which is a Plant of another kind) in a *Vineyard*. You must know: though the Vine Plants, as being most, gave denomination, (as *Denominatio est à potiori*) Yet it was usual with them, both to sow Corn in *Vineyards* betwixt their Vines. *Deut. xxii. 9.* Thou shalt not sow thy *Vineyard* with divers seeds: And also to plant Trees of another kind, partly to support their *Vines*, which are a weak and tender Plant, and partly to make the better improvement of their Ground: and none more commonly than *Fig trees*. Which makes it so frequent to name them together, sit every man under his *Vine*, and under his *Fig-tree*.

The planting this *Fig-tree* in the *Vineyard*, signifies the calling any Nation to the knowledg, and profession of the Gospel, and making them a *Church*, as a part of the *Universal Church*: or it is the receiving
a man

Of Deferring Repentance. 11

Elm a man or woman into the Church by Baptism. See the expression in the very Letter, *Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.* Know ye not that as many of us as were Baptised into Jesus Christ were Baptised into his death, and if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, &c. So that he useth the Phrases of being Baptised, and Planted; as signifying the same, or explaining one the other. So that every one of you who have been Baptised, are thereby Planted in Gods Vineyard: admitted to partake of the Ordinances and Priviledges of the Gospel-Church, and thereby obliged to the Duties, Consequent upon those Priviledges. As a Tree which stands in the Orchard is bound (as I may say) to bear part of that Fruit, which the Master and Owner of the Orchard looks for.

His coming to look for Fruit, is a most obvious Allusion, to the custom amongst men, to go into their Gardens, and Orchards, to see what Fruit the Trees bear, or whether they bear any, which they have caused to be set in them. *Cant. vii. 12.* Let us go early into the Vineyards; let us see if the Vine flourish, whether the tender Grapes appear, and the Pomegranates put forth. And is the same with *Isa. v. 2.* where God saith, He lookt for Grapes, which

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which verse 7. he interprets, *He looks for judgment and righteousness*, and which he speaks in plain words, without any *Parable*. *Psal. xiv. 2. The Lord looketh down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God*, and is equivalent to what is expressed by another sense, viz. of hearing. *Jer. viii. 6. I hearkned and heard but they spake not aright, no man repented of the evil of his doings, saying what have I done: and might, were it needful, be illustrated by many other Scriptures*. In a word, it is as much as if it were said, God comes to look after every man, whether they fulfil their *Covenant of Christianity*, which they made with him when they were *Baptised*, and *planted in his Church*.

Lastly, His finding no Fruit, is Gods disappointment, as to what he greatly desires, looks for, yea even longs for. No true *Repentance*, no sound *Faith*, no sincere *Obedience*, no *Reformation of Life*, no hearty turning unto God; no *Holiness and Righteousness*, no serious care, nor vigorous *Zeal to glorifie God*, and save their own souls, or as it is, *Hos. iv. 1. No truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land, but swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery, and breaking out till*

will blood toucheth blood, and no man reproveth one another for these evils, but are ready to strive with the Priest if he reprove them for them, *verse 2, 4.* Such rotten and vile Figs are all the Fruit they bear, or at best, a few leaves of empty Profession, and some cheap formal duties, and lip labour, and drawing near to God with the body, while their hearts are left behind, and are far from God, being set upon other objects, and God hath no true, nor real love, or fear, or acceptable service.

And in that 'tis said a *Fig-tree*, in the singular number, it implies, that every particular Church, every individual and particular person, shall be strictly looked after, they shall not be hid in the thicknes of the Trees, not lost in the croud, nor escape or remain less discovered, then Adam and his Wife, who in vain attempted to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord, amongst the Trees of the Garden, Gen. iii. 8. Which I only point to, by way of Allusion. Every Tree, every person shall be particularly inquired after, and sought out: if there be but one unfruitful Tree it shall be discovered, the Lord of the Vineyard will certainly find it out, and so will he every one that is so, one by one,

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one, be they never so many that are such.

You have heard what the *Lord* and owner of the *Vineyard* did. Planted a *Tree*, a *Fig-tree*, which is naturally capable of bearing *Fruit*, in his *Vineyard*, a good soyl apt to nourish it, and as 'twas just he should, came and sought *Fruit*, but was unjustly disappointed. Hear now what he saith.

Then said he to the dresser of the Vineyard, behold these three years I come, seeking Fruit on this Tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?

I shall explain these words with the like brevity, and then sum up the improvement of them together.

And here four particulars must be explained.

First, Who is to be understood by the *Dresser of the Vineyard*, and why he is told of the *Fig-trees* unfruitfulness.

Secondly, What is meant by the *three years* in which he came seeking *Fruit* of it.

Thirdly, What is meant by the Sentence, to *Cut it down*, and why the Execution of it is enjoined to the *Dresser of the Vineyard*?

Fourthly,

Of Deferring Repentance. 15

Fourthly, What is meant by the *Cumbring of the Ground*, which contains the reason to justify the severity of the Sentence of cutting down.

First, who is to be understood by the *Dresser of the Vineyard*, the most general opinion is, that it is the Minister, or in complex consideration the Ministers of the Gospel, *Cæsus Apostolorum*, as a good Expositor expresseth it.

But I meet with other *Opinions* of which I shall name four.

First, 'Tis *Jesus Christ*. In various *Parables*, God and Christ sustain various persons, as *St. John xv. 1.* God himself is the *Vine-dresser*, Christ the *Vine*, and particular Believers the *Branches*. *I am the true vine, my Father is the husband-man, ye are the branches.* But here Christ is the *Dresser of the Vineyard*, to whom God hath committed the care of his *Church*. To be sure 'tis he who is the great and prevailing Intercessour: and by reason of the Intercession that the *Dresser* here makes, *Lord let it alone this year.* Some Interpreters refer it to him, as *St. Ambrose, bonus cultor in quo ecclesia fundamentum, &c.*

And *Theophylact*, This *Dresser* is Christ who would water them with his *Dctrine* and his *Passion*, who had been fruit-

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fruitless under the *Law* and *Prophets*.

Secondly, *The Civil Magistrate* in a Christian State, who is to be the keeper of both *Tables*, to see to the maintenance of the true Religion towards God, as well as civil honesty amongst men. Who are promised to be *Nursing-Fathers* to the *Church*, Isa. xlix. 23. and therefore must look to the Children of it. One principal branch of a Fathers care being that his Children be trained up in the Nurture and admonition of the Lord. To become fruitful in the Works of Righteousness, and to coerce and restrain those who are otherwise. *David* having declared his resolution, *Psal. ci. ult. I will early destroy all the wicked of the Land, that I may cut off all evil doers from the City of the Lord.*

Thirdly, the third Opinion is, that it is every good man in the *Church* which Prays for others. As *St. August. Bonus cultor omnis sanctus in Ecclesia qui orat, &c.* Or 'tis by way of Allusion every mans own Conscience, the Soul being the *Vineyard*, Conscience the keeper of it. *They made me keeper of the Vineyards, but mine own Vineyard have I not kept, Cant. i. 6.* Nothing being more common than for God to convince mens Consciencés of their faults and unfruitfulness, to bring them.

phers. them to Repentance and amendment. which is congruously exprest here. O sinner I have come three years seeking for Fruit on thee, and find none, and thereupon bids *Conscience* do its Office. Check, Rebuke, and even torment them for it.

Fourthly, But the most received Opinion, and what may seem most proper, is that 'tis the *Ministers of the Gospel*. The ordinary Gloss, makes it the *Apostles*. *St. Gregory Ordo Praepositorum*. 'Tis properly their work to plant, and to water what is Planted, to dig and to Manure the Lords Garden, *I have planted, Apollos watered*, saith *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. iii. 6.

Now there may be these reasons, why God directs his speech to the Ministers, and tells them of the peoples faults. 1. To awaken them to Repentance and amendment if they have been accessory to them, as the good Lord pardon us, 'tis to be fear'd we too often are. 2. To provoke them to their duty, that they may not contract guilt by their negligence, what God spake to *Ezekiel* in another comparison, may well be applyed in this. *Eze. iii. 17, 18, 19. Son of man, I have made thee a watch-man unto the House of Israel: therefore hear the word from my mouth and give them warning from me. When I say*
unto

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unto the wicked thou shalt surely dye, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his way to save his life, the same wicked man shall dye in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way he shall dye in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

So here I have made thee the Dresser of my Vineyard, if thou do not thy duty to make the Trees Fruitful, they shall be cut down for their unfruitfulness, but I will lay their unfruitfulness to thy charge. But if they continue Barren, notwithstanding thou hast done thy part to make them bear Fruit, they shall be cut down, but thou hast delivered thy own soul. 3. To provoke them to Pray for them, God loves to have Intercession made for his people, and wonders when none will do it. Isa. lix. 16. He wondered there was no Intercessor. Ezek. xxii. 30. I sought for a man amongst them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the Land, that I should not destroy it: and I found none, therefore I poured out my indignation upon them and consumed them. And Joel ii. 17. it is enjoined expressly. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord weep between

between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say; spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach. When Sodom it self was to be reckoned with, and God came down to see whether their sin was as great as the cry of it proclaimed it to be. He will first acquaint Abraham with it, that he may Pray and plead for them, and never left granting till he left asking on their behalf. And when God threatens to consume the Israelites, as in a moment, Moses and Aaron Fell on their faces, Num. xvi. 45. and Aaron at Moses direction took a Censer in his hand, and put on Incense, the Type of Prayer, and stood between the living and the dead, and made attonement, and the plague was stayed, and Psal. cvi. 23. He said he would have destroyed them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath. And here as soon as ever the Dresser of the Vineyard hears the doom, cut it down, he falls to interceeding, Lord let it alone this year also. And indeed mutual Prayer betwixt Ministers and people is exceeding needful and an indispensable duty. See Eph. iii. 14, 20. Col. i. 9, 12. 1 Thessal. v. 23. and 2 Thessal. iii. 1. Brethren Pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course. Heb. xiii. 18. Rom. xv. 30. And I justly fear

fear the neglect, or cold performance of this duty is one great cause of the small success of the Ministry, and the unfruitfulness of the people, I exhort and earnestly beseech you that it may be mended.

Secondly, The *second* thing to be explained in this *verse* is, what is meant by the *three years*. And there are a great many Interpretations given of them, to touch but a few. *Eman. Sa* out of *St. Ambrose*, expounds it thus. He came to *Abraham* in *Circumcision*, to *Moses* in the *Law*, to *Mary* in his *Incarnation*, that is to the *Jews* by these; but they were not purified by *Circumcision* because they were *uncircumcised* in heart, not *Sanctified* by the *Law*, because they were ignorant of its virtue, not *justified* because they knew not the Grace of God and would not repent. *Itaque nullus in Synagoga fructus inventus.* *St. Gregory* Interprets it, of the *Law of Nature*, the written *Law*, and the *Gospel*. Others of the three sorts of Governments by which God disciplined that people to Obedience, *Judges*, *Kings*, *H. Priests*, but all in vain.

Theophilact, of the three Estates or *Periods* of mans *Age*, *Youth*, *Manhood*, *Old Age*. Or rather thus, *Childhood*, *Youth*, and

and the *Mature Estate of Manhood*, then remains only the fourth of *Old Age*, and if the errors and unfruitfulness of those, be not redeemed by the fruitfulness of this, then there's no hope, but down it must for ever. Others literally of the three years of Christs publick Ministry.

I will name no more, nor stay to censure these, but I rather suppose the true meaning to be, without any mystery in the number, that it signifies many times, a *definite number* being put for an *indefinite*, I have come again, and again, and again, that is, very often. And there is a *Conjecture* why he pitches upon *three years*, drawn from an observation which Naturalists make, that if the *Fig-tree* begin not to bear within three years after its planting, it will never bear after. But to pass that also as an uncertain thing and so *anxiety*, it is sufficient to interpret it for often, the *ternary Number* being used so, almost Proverbially, *Si ter pulsanti*, &c. As if he had said, I have waited long and come often, looking for Fruit, and hitherto my expectation hath been disappointed, therefore I am weary of forbearing, and will suffer the abuse of my patience no longer, *Cut it down*, that is, execute against it the deserved Judgment. And as this
is

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is enjoined to his Ministers to be performed by them, it implies, 1. That the *Fruitless Tree* is worthy to be *Cut down*, and is actually under the Sentence of Condemnation, tho the Execution may be defer'd by way of Reprieve. Every unfruitful sinner under the Gospel, is in a state of actual condemnation, there is only a small respiting for a while, and a short reprieve allowed to afford him time to sue out his pardon, according to that from our Saviours own mouth, *St. John iii. 18. He that believeth not is condemned already.* So he that repenteth not is condemned already. 2. He bids his Ministers *Cut them down*, that is, cut them off by sharp reproof, and cutting rebukes, and *Church Censures*; cast them out of my *Vineyard*, my *Church*, from my *Ordinances* that they may be ashamed, that they may be afraid, that they may be awakened. 3. To shew the unavoidable certainty of it if they continue impenitent, let them know what will certainly be their end, *Jer. xv. 1. Cast them out of my sight*, declare they shall be cast out, and *Jer. i. 10. I have set thee over the Nations; to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down*, that is, to declare who shall be so dealt with, and I will make it good, what is bound on Earth shall

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shall be bound in Heaven. Say to the wicked it shall be ill with him, thou also shall be cut off, as before the Text, you shall all likewise perish, that is unless you repent.

4. *Why cumbereth it the Ground?* This contains the reason of the Righteous Sentence of cutting down, and intimates that God never proceeds to severity without cause. And ye shall know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God, Eze. xiv. 23. 'Tis a reproachful upbraiding the *Fruitless-tree*, the word is rend'ed variously: it signifies to make unprofitable, why takes it up a room to no purpose? and keeps out a better, and robs others both of nourishment and influence, by drawing the fatness of the soil, and casting a malignant shade! And teacheth us that a man who continues in the Church impenitent. 1. Robs God of the Glory which would redound to him, if he brought forth the Fruits of Righteousness which he ought, for Christ saith his Father is glorified when his Disciples bring forth much fruit, John xv. 8. and commands that our Light shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorifie our Father in Heaven. And St. Paul tells us, that the fruits of Righteousness are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God,

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God, Phil. i. 11. which *Glory* God lofeth by every *Tree* which stands on his ground and bears no *Fruit*. 2. Such a man does abundance of mischief by his bad *example*: imboldens others to be, and continue, as bad as himself, and hinders and discourages them from being better. 3. *Disparages the Soyl*, *causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of*, Gods Ordinances to be vilified, and his name to be *Blasphemed*, and his faithful Ministers to be reproacht as if they were the causes of all that wickedness, which they mourn over, and endeavour to reform with all their might. As we say of servants or beasts that thrive not, look ill, are in bad plight, they shame their keeper, as if he starved them, or allowed them not what is sufficient. So when you who have been *Baptized*, lead bad lives, and go on in *impunity*, you give great *scandal*, cause much offence, and put an excuse into the mouths of those who prophanely neglect and slight Christs Institutions; and when they are exhorted to frequent them, or reprov'd for neglecting them, they have this answer ready, why so much ado about these matters? we see those who use them most, are never the better, but as bad or worse, than those who seldom or never meddle with

with them, what a shame is it to be thus reproached, and to be so ill furnish'd to refute it? 'Tis a great offence that's given by this means, *but wo to the man by whom the offence cometh*, it had been better for him, to have been plunged in the Sea, then Planted in the Vineyard. For God will severely avenge these many evils, which are the Consequences of their unfruitfulness, unless speedy and sincere Repentance, and amendment, prevent the Execution of the denounced Sentence.

And this may suffice for the meaning of the two first verses of the Text, which concern the Lord and Owner of the Vineyard, both as to what he did, and what he said. And may be summ'd up in this short recapitulation. The Great God hath in much mercy admitted you into his Church by Baptism, and hath often come, to see whether you do, and long expected that you should, make good that solemn Covenant you then made with him, by bringing forth the Fruits of sincere Repentance, sound Faith, and Universal, unreserved new Obedience; but hitherto hath not found them, but the quite contrary.

And therefore bids his Ministers, and you by them, with attention and admiration

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ration take notice of his past goodness, and that he takes severe notice of your continuing badness, and provoking disappointment of his expectation and patience, and therefore pronounces Sentence against you, to cut you off from his Church by his Spiritual Sword, and that he will cut you off from the Land of the Living, for your robbing him of his Glory, for your hindring others by your bad example to be better, or imboldning them to be as bad as your selves, and causing his Holy Institutions to be evil thought of, and evil spoken of, as if they were useless and of no efficacy, and his *Holy name* to be blasphemed.

Now proceed to the other two which concern the *Dresser* of the *Vineyard*; the former of which contains his *Intercession* that it may be spared a little longer, and tryed one more, if yet it may amend. The latter his *concession* that if it do not, then the denounced Sentence take place, and be put in execution, there remaining no shadow of pretence for farther arrest of Judgment.

I shall endeavour the *Explication* of these with the greatest clearness, plainness and brevity I can, in order to the *Application* of them, which I again tell you I chiefly intend.

In

In the former, His Intercession, are two particulars. First, an expresse Prayer in behalf of the barren tree, in which are included two requests, one for respiting the Sentence, and allowing it more time, Lord let it alone this year also. The other for leave, to bestow more pains and cost about it, digging and dunging. Secondly, An implied promise on his own behalf, that if his Lord will give him leave, and spare the Tree, he will spare neither cost nor pains, but will do all that Art and Industry can perform, he will dig about it, and dung it, do the best and the most he can to make it fruitful.

First, The expresse Prayer for the barren Tree: Lord let it alone this year also, &c. In which the first branch is for more time. The second for leave to bestow more cost and pains upon it. Note hence. 1. 'Tis the duty of Gods Ministers to Pray for the people, yea even for the unfruitful, and impenitent amongst them. Isa: lxiii. 6, 7. I have set watch-men upon thy Walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the Earth. 2. They must not excuse their faults, tho they may and

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must beg pardon for them, that would rob God of the Glory of his Mercy, and harden them in security, against repentance and amendment. He tacitely acknowledges the culpableness of their past *unfruitfulness*, and confesseth Gods goodness in suffering them to stand so long, while he Prays it may be *let alone this year also*; it was meer Mercy to let it stand so long: and it will be more Mercy to let it alone a little longer; therefore, O Lord, *Let it alone this year also*, even for thy Mercies sake. 3. He asks not three years more, but one year, after three years *barrenness* and disappointment, they must ask modestly who would prevail: one years forbearance more, is a great Mercy to them, who have sinned away many already. Every day, every hour should be precious to a Reprieved man, to sue out his Pardon, and make his Peace. He is now upon his good Behaviour, this is his last tryal if he continue and persist in his old wont, Execution proceeds, as against one, of whom there is no hope, of proving better.

The Second *Branch* of his Prayer, is for leave to bestow more cost, and pains, upon it, *Till I dig about it*, there's labour and pains; the Ministerial Office, when truly

truly and faithfully discharged, is really very laborious. We beseech you brethren know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and esteem them very highly for their Works sake. 1. Thes. v. 12, 13. Those who labour in the Word and Doctrine, 1. Tim. v. 17. Tho the Ministry be a great dignity, yet it takes denomination, from duty and service. We Preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: and our selves your servants for Jesus sake, 2 Cor. iv. 5. And our Lord himself gives his Apostles both a rule against exercising Lordship, and sets himself as an example of it, Lu. xlii. 26, 27. It shall not be so with you, but he that is greatest among you, shall be as the youngest, and the chief as he that serveth. For I am among you as he that serveth. 'Tis well known the word so often used in the new Testament for the Ministry, Διακονια signifies the most painfull labour. Such as of those who sweat, and by their speed in their Travel raise the dust, and digging is one of the hardest kinds of labour, such as the unfaithful Steward openly confesses too hard for him, I cannot dig, Luke xvi. But tho Ministers should labour wherever they are, they may not labour where they please. Paul and his Companions in

labour were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to Preach the Word in Asia, And when they assayed to go into Bithynia the spirit suffered them not, Act. xvi. 6, 7. They are Labourers but 'tis together with God, 1 Cor. iii. 9. And must have their Station assigned by him. And as the Lord of the Harvest must be prayed, To send forth Labourers into his Harvest, St. Matth. ix. 38. So his leave must be obtained to continue and bestow more labour, in what field soever he assigns them to work, in and when his Vineyard hath provoked him by disappointing his expectation, and not answering past labour and charge bestowed on it. He passes this Sentence against it, it shall not be pruned, nor digged, And I'll command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it, Isa. v. 6. As 'tis not a small Mercy to have faithful and painful Ministers, so 'tis one of the greatest Judgments to have them removed, and to be put under such as are described, Zech. xi. 16. and therefore God should be sought by earnest Prayer, to vouchsafe the Mercy, and avert the Judgment. Next he asks to bestow cost as well as pains, there must be *dunging* as well as *digging*; 'tis chargeable mending barren Land, yet we must not stick at this. See 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15. Parents must lay up, and

and say out too, for their children, I will gladly spend and be spent for you.

Secondly, these words imply a promise on his own behalf, as well as contain an express Prayer on behalf of the people. Lord if thou wilt be intreated to let it alone this year, I will dig about it and dung it, I will do all that Art and Industry can do, I will not be wanting on my part to perform the most, the best, All that I can, to make it Fruitful. Note, first, in general, they who would prevail with God, must add endeavours to their Prayers, 'tis but a tempting and mocking God to do otherwise, *Ora & Labora*, and 'tis a good direction, the Adage gives, *Manus ad Solum, oculus ad Caelum*. The Hand on the Plough, and the Eye lift up to Heaven is the Emblem of the thriving Husbandman.

And Solomon hath both these passages in one Chapter, Prov. x. 4, and 22. The hand of the diligent maketh rich, and, The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich. He tempts God, who only Prays, and labours not. He despiseth God, who only labours and Prays not. But he honours and pleases him, and shall be blessed of him, who joyns both together. Remember how Moses concludes the nintieth Psalm. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon

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us, and establish the work of our hands upon
us; yea the work of our hands establish thou
us. The Prayer for blessing on their
work, shews the concurrence of their
Works and Prayer. The hard Heart and
the soft Hand, are both hateful to the
Lord: but the soft Heart, and the hard
Hand are his delight; my meaning is, an
Heart that melts in Prayer, and an Hand
that is grown callous, and brawny, with
industrious Constancy, in diligent Labour.

Let me close this, with what I judge a
very necessary and seasonable advice.
When your *Ministers* visit you in time of
sickness to exhort you, and comfort you,
and pray with you, 'tis usually one part
of our exhortation, that if God spare
you, and restore you to health, you would
shew forth the truth of the *repentance*, you
profess when you are like to dye, by bring-
ing forth *Fruits meet for Repentance*; if
God restore you, and suffer you to live.
And 'tis one part of our Prayer, that
God would vouchsafe to restore you, and
afford you more time, to perfect your
Knowledge, your *Faith*, your *Repentance*,
and what ever else may make you more
fit to dye, with safety, and with com-
fort. Now if God be pleased to hear our
Prayers, and to spare you and restore you,
do it.

doth not this lay as great an obligation upon us Ministers, as may be, to apply our selves to you, when you are so recovered, to put you in mind of the promises you made, whilst you conceived your selves in danger of death.

And as great an engagement upon you, to expect from us, and accept at our hands, willingly and thankfully, our best endeavours to assist you and provoke you to be such, as you wish you had been, when you thought you should have dyed. If the *Vine-Dresser* here promise, that if God will spare the *barran tree*, one year more, after he had threatned to cut it down, he will on his part do, all that Art and Industry can do, to make it fruitful, applying his care to it particularly, besides the general Husbandry he bestows upon the whole *Vineyard*. I think no inference can be drawn more clearly, than that when God hath threatned to cut you down by death, and the Prayers of your Minister, and others have prevailed with God to defer the Sentence, and spare you a little longer, it is incumbent on you, both to desire and accept his help, and on him to offer and afford it you and to do all his Christian Charity, and Ministerial Duty can help him to do, that those ends

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may be attained, for which God spared you, if he spared you in his Mercy. And you should be as willing to send for your Ministers when you are recovered, and they as ready to attend you, as when you were in danger; how much this is practised I know not, but how necessary it is that it should be, I appeal both to your Consciences, and to this *Text*. And therefore exhort with earnestness it may.

But I must give the meaning of this *place*, or expression, till I shall dig about it, and dung it, more particularly, because much of the Application I design will have dependance upon it. *Donec ablague avaro, confereor avaro*. It is an allusion to what is most usual, and most useful, to be done, to barren trees.

1. Open the Roots, remove the clung Earth, and the hungry Loam, the cold and binding Clay from about them, lay them open to the Weather, let in the Sun and Rain, and expose them to the influence of Heaven, the nourishing Dew and refreshing Air, cut the stunted, and starved, and bark-bound Roots, that they may sprout afresh, put out young Fibres, shoot out new Suckers, and draw nourishment to feed them, and lay good Mendment, mellow Dung, some richer Soyl, and Earth that's tender, well prepared,

pared, so warm and nourish them, that the *Roots* may have fit nourishment, and may be made fit to attract it, and receive it. And if any thing can, this will make the *Tree* bear *Fruit*, 'tis all that Art and Industry can do: and it is capable of. What could have been more? *Isa. v. 4.* So a Minister that interceeds for a people or person that they may be spared, must add to his Prayers all that Spiritual wisdom can teach him, and Holy industry can assist him in, to make them better, that they may bring forth the desired *Fruits* of Righteousness. But to be more particular, I find much said concerning both these expressions, but I confess nothing which gives me satisfaction, I shall therefore, passing by all others, confine my self to one *Interpretation*, which appears to me, most proper and pertinent, of any I meet with in others, or occurred to my own thoughts.

But before I name it, I must premise one *Caveat* to prevent an indecency, and to preserve a decorum, that you may not take offence at the comparison, I am about to make, as unseemly or rude; the word *Dung*, is even of a noysom sound, as being in itself a loathsome stinking, and defiling thing: but it is not to be look'd on,

under

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under that notion, in this place: but in a more benign acceptation, drawn from its usefulness, which is to warm, to mellow, and communicate a prolifick vertue to the *Earth*, and the *Plants*, to make them Fat and flourishing, and exuberant in bearing Fruit.

And tho *Dung* on your Cloaths or Bodies, in your Houses or your Walks, would be loathsome, and a foul annoyance; yet in your *Fields*, and *Orchards*, it looks well, and smells not ill; but is desirable, and even comely, because 'tis necessary and very useful. And suppose yet to prevent indecency and harshness to the Interpretation, I am about to give, we mollifie the very word, till I may manure it, and lay mendment to it; for in the scope of this *Parable*, not the bad, but the good quality of the *Dung* is to be considered, not how it marrs by its foulness, but how it mends by its fatness.

This premised to prevent prejudice, I now tell you: that by *Digging*, and *Dunging*, I conceive may most properly be meant applying the *Law*, and the *Gospel*: the *Threatnings*, and the *Promises*; Gods *Judgments* and *Mercies*: and the most earnest terrifying sinners, impenitent bold
and

and daring sinners; by the first, to bring them to repentance towards God, and the alluring, wooing, and persuading, broken-hearted, awakened, trembling sinners; by the other, to Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, *Digging* breaks the Ground, the Spade of the Law, the Plough of the Law, breaks up the fallow Ground of the Heart as the Prophet's phrase is. Gods wrath revealed from Heaven, against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men: in his terrible threatnings, and awaking Judgments, startles the obdurate sinner, rends the rock he is planted on: tears in pieces his hardened security, and bold presumption, turns up the tough, the cold, and clungy Soyl, in which the very roots of his Heart are shut up, and fastned, and which chill and stunt his growth, that he cannot thrive or bear Fruit. And then the Dew and Rain, then the kind and benign influence of the Sun, may reach and cherish him: then the good Soyl, the fresh mendment, the prolifick Manure, and the mellow tender Mould, may be applied and come near. Even the tender Mercies of God, and the warm blood of Jesus Christ, and the pretious promises of Pardon, Life, and Grace, by which these

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these are offered and applied. It is observed, and practised, that to apply blood to the *Root* of a Tree, a Vine especially, is the best and most proper means to make it fruitful. And *Historians* tell us, that the *Vallies* and *Gardens* about *Jerusalem*, were rendered Fertile beyond expression, almost to a *Miracle*: by the abundance of blood, which flowed down (by the *Vaults*, made on purpose to convey it away, under the *Temple*,) from the multitude of the *Sacrifices* which were offered there. And I am sure there is nothing comparable to the blood of the great *Sacrifice*, of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to make a barren Heart fruitful, especially if it be first well dug about by the Spade of the Law, and the Roots of it laid bare and open to receive the due application of it. And he that will or doth interceed, to have a barren, an impenitent people spared, must add to his Prayers for them, his best his utmost endeavours with them, to dig about them first, by convincing them of sin, rebuking and reprovng them cuttingly, till like *St. Peters* Hearers *Acts ii.* They be pricked to the Heart. By denouncing the Laws, Curse, and Gods Judgments. By shewing them their lost and undone condition, by stripping them
of

of all their *choulers*, and false confidences; by teaching them the necessity of a speedy and sincere repentance; and by urging and pressing them to fly from the wrath to come, and removing all their presumptions of peace and safety, (while they continue ignorant, and destitute of Gods Righteousness) which lye like cold Earth, and clungy *fullen Lown*, about their Hearts, and hinder them from drawing any nourishment which may make them thrive, or bear the Fruit which God expects.

And when this is done, then lay fresh Mould, and mellow tender Earth about them, then offer and apply unto them the promises of Pardon, Peace and Life, through the tender Mercies of our God, in the blood of our dear Redeemer Jesus Christ. Exhorting, inviting, persuading, beseeching, alluring, and by the Holy violence of Love, even constraining and compelling them, to turn, come in, and be reconciled to God. And if any thing, will make a *barren tree*, bear *Fruit*; if any thing will make a stubborn, and an hardened sinner yield, and relent, repent and amend, and bring forth Fruit to God, this will do it.

And

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And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down. This last Verse of the Text contains the Dresser of the Vineyard's submissive concession, and willing yielding, to the putting the Sentence of excision, and cutting the Fruitless Tree down, as most equitable and just, if it still continue Fruitless after more patience, and more pains and cost allowed it, and bestowed upon it in vain.

If it bear Fruit. 'Tis an imperfect Speech, in which somewhat is exprest, and somewhat suppress, which is to be supplied and understood, a form of speaking which men use when they speak with emotion, vehemency, and a great Pathos. *Aposiopesis*, or *Anantopodoton*, a figure proper to, and of frequent use in the Attick dialect. 'Tis seldom hard to supply it, and make the Sence perfect, in this place 'tis very easie, and obvious. Thou shalt suffer it to stand, and not cut it down. Our Translatoars have done it briefly, yet sufficiently; well: As we use to say, when we exhort, persuade, threaten, promise, with an implied condition, if you will do so or so, well and good, if not, then take what follows. So here, if the impatient sinner, will repent and turn to God,

God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance; then God will put all his past iniquities out of his remembrance, and will spare and not destroy him. And there is, if I may so speak, a great efficacy in the suppressing of the answer, the Lord of the Vineyard gives consent, by his silence, and saith much, by saying nothing, but leaves it to be taken for granted, he yields and is content it should be so. *Annuit*, such a gracious holding of his Peace, is as *significative*, as if he had said, as elsewhere: *Say to the Righteous it shall be well with him.* And this manner of intimating his mind, hath its great usefulness, it gives the highest degree of assurance, never doubt it, question it not in the least: no man *Plants Trees* in his Orchard, merely to make Fuel of, but to bear Fruit: and had a great deal rather they should stand, to answer that end; than cut them down to be burnt; and when they answer his first desire and design, will never do it.

As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye dye, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. The Tree which hath been long barren, the

Chri-

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Christian which hath been long unfruitful, yet if upon digging and dunging, if upon new endeavours, and fresh application made to him, he bear Fruit, I need not tell it you, you may be sure on't, and take it for granted, he shall be spared, and not cut down. *He shall surely live, he shall not dye.* Ezeck. xviii. 2

But if not, Then after that thou shalt cut it down. If it do not bear Fruit after all this patience with it, in sparing it another year, and all the cost and pains of digging and dunging it, then cut it down and spare not, I have no more to say for it, I'll never speak word more in its behalf.

They, who after long barrenness add a secure and obstinate unfruitfulness, against a fresh indulged patience, and renewed calls, warnings, and means to make them fruitful, to bring them to repentance and amendment, shall be surely, suddenly, severely cut down, without excuse, apology, or pity. According to that of Solomon, Proverbs xxix. 1. *He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. He flees to the pit, let no man stay him.* We

We may sum up the meaning of these two Verses, in this short recapitulation, by way of Paraphrase; as if he had spoken plainly to this Sence. O Lord I humbly acknowledge thou hast exercised great long-suffering, and shewed much mercy already to this sinful people, to this, and that impenitent man, and woman, yet I beseech thee for thy meer mercy sake, spare them a little longer, try them yet once more: and give me leave, opportunity and an heart, to convince them of their duty, to make them sensible of their danger, to persuade them to do the one, and avoid the other, and I promise and engage my self, by thy Grace to do all that Art and Industry can do: all that Christian Charity, and my Ministerial Compassions and Office can do, proportionable to those Talents and Abilities thou hast vouchsafed to intrust me with, to bring them to Repentance. And if by thy blessing, those endeavours succeed and prosper: I know, O Lord, Thou wilt of thy goodness pardon what is past, and spare them, and Repeal thy Sentence, and repent thee of the evil denounced against them. But if after thy granting what I have Prayed, and my performing what I have Promised, they will take no warning, but continue secure and obstinate, as hitherto. Then, Lord, do with them as thou pleasest, execute upon them what seems

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seems good in thine own Eyes. Thy Justice will be clear; I shall be free from their blood; they will be without excuse, and all the fault, and guilt, will light upon their own heads. Cut them down and spare not. I will not, I cannot speak one word more, in their behalf.

Thus I have as concisely as I could, and with the most ease and familiar expressions, explained this excellent Parable; and now divesting it of the Figurative and borrowed words, I might set before you the Propositions and Observations in which the Scope and Strength of it is comprehended.

First, When God hath received any man into his Church by Baptism, He expects he should, and will strictly take notice whether he doth perform his Baptismal Covenant.

Secondly, Every man professing Christianity, and not living as his Covenant of Christianity binds him, is actually under a Sentence of condemnation.

Thirdly, God is gracionously ready upon Intercession made to him, to grant a Reprieve, and respite Judgment, and try such men whether they will return and amend, and if they do, will spare and Pardon them.

But,

Fourthly,

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Fourthly, If this forbearance, and goodness of God prevail not to make them Repent and return, God and man, Heaven and Earth conspire and resolve the speedy, the severe, the immutable, the Righteous destruction of such men.

I might proceed upon all, or single out some one of these, and give clear Evidences, of the truth; and convincing Reasons of the Equity, and Righteousness, of them. But I wave that method at present, and shall conclude all with an Application of the whole to our selves, suitable to the Explication which hath been given.

And this Application may be twofold. First, looking upon the Fig-tree as a Type and Figure of the Church in this Nation, which with respect to the Catholick or Universal Church, as the Vineyard, is as a particular Tree Planted in it. And so the Application mightily alarms us all, to live as that Holy and Excellent Religion, God hath vouchsafed to us, requires and directs us. For fear of, and under the Penalty, of being deprived and bereaved of it. And pulled up by the very Roots, out of that good Soyl we are Planted in, or stript of our defence and laid wast, and both the wall demolisht, and the hedge thrown

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thrown down, to let in upon us, *the little Foxes*; and the great *Wild-Boar*, to speer our Branches, and to turn up our Roots. And I the rather touch this because the very Letter of the *Text* comes home to us in *terminis*, and fits our circumstances as exactly as if it had primarily been adapted to us, and designed for us.

Amongst other Interpretations of the *three years*, given in the *Explication*; one was the *Governours* under which the Church had been Defended and Disciplined to Obedience. How *Parallel* is this to our Case? We have injoyed the Gospel, the True Reformed Protestant Religion, under three Protestant Princes of Glorious Memory. The famous Queen Elizabeth, the Learned King James and the Royal Martyr King Charles the first.

In all whose Reigns God came and lookt for Fruit futable to his cost and care, and our opportunities; but how much his expectation was disappointed, we may with shame and sadness reflect, if we call to mind the gradual declining from the power of Godliness, and Zeal for the Life of our Holy Religion. And if that convince us not, the stretching out his hand against us, and the bloody confusions by which he threatened to cut down our Church,

Church, and the belie designs and proud hopes of our restless Enemies may. And yet then he raised up, and set over us, our present *Gracious King*, (whom God in his infinite Mercy preserve long to us) who hath given us, and the world, so many open, and publick assurances, of his maintayning the True Protestant Religion, and under his Government we yet enjoy it. God letting us alone this year also, and if we now bear Fruit, Well: if we live answerable to the Gospel, yet continued to us, in Righteousness, Sobriety, and Godliness, we have yet hope we may be spared, and the Gospel, and the True Religion continued to us; but if we provoke him, and in this Year, which is as a Year of our Reprieve, and tryal: we prove, or continue, as bad as heretofore, or rather grow worse, Profane, Loose, Lukewarm, Formal, Contentious, Factionous, proud, Censuring, Reviling, Worrying one another, casting all the fault, and the blame, upon others, as like to bring upon us the evils we fear, and excusing, flattering and indulging our selves in our Lusts, and refusing to bring forth the pleasant and excellent Fruits, which our most Holy Religion is naturally apt to produce, wherever it hath possession

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sion of mens Hearts in truth. What can we expect but that Gods vengeance find us out, and he rid himself of us.

And proceed to put his *Sentence* against us, in execution and *cut us down*, as a *Protestant Church*, even by the Roots, and let in upon the Nation, the heaviest plague, that ever an *Holy God* in his fierce wrath, avenged the despising and abuse of his *Gospel* by. I may, I hope without offence, declare my just fears, that if *Christ* should use as strict a scrutiny towards us, as he did to the *Church of Ephesus*, Rev. ii. He would not find so many good things amongst us, as he owns he found in that *Church*, and there commends them for, *verse 2*, and *3*, and that he would find more evils in us, than he there charges them with: which is only because they had declined in their Zeal, *lest their first love*, *verse 4*. and yet let us with fear and trembling read and consider what he writes to that *Church*, *verse 5*. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his place except thou repent.

I might also *Paralel* the case of most of the other *Churches* with our *Church*, and the threats denounced against them,
with

with what we have cause to expect and fear, thereby to provoke us to be *speedy*, and *zealous* to repent, while this *Year* of Grace lasts: lest his provoked patience, both hasten the expiring of this *Year*, and also expire, and end with it, and the thing which we fear, come upon us, in its perfection. I mean the loss of our *Religion*, because we have not improved it, as we ought to have done. Let us not flatter our selves, though we had not so visible, and near a prospect of our dangers, God can easily make his *Decrees* bring forth, and his *Vengeance* overtake us, yea overwhelm us, tho we saw no *Instruments* prepared to bring it about. Those *Seven Churches*, have many *Ages* since felt the direful effects of his threatned Judgments. And seeing he spared not them, Oh that we could timely, and wisely fear, lest he also spare not us. I know the Nation is startled and awakened, and there are great thoughts of Heart, great searchings of Heart deservedly about this matter, and if any be asleep in such a *storm*, its to be suspected 'tis those, for whose sake this *tempest* is most likely to be upon us. And I know there are many *projects* to prevent the *evil*, we have so much deserved, and may so justly fear. But there is

one means, which if it were as easie to prevail with men to practise, as 'tis obvious to be discovered, would alone save us or put a blessing, upon what ever else might be innocently propounded, to bring us unto safety: and no good man need be afraid, or ashamed, to propound it: and he must be a very bad man, who will not be ashamed, to reproach it, or reject it. And 'tis what Christ gives to the Church of Laodicea, *Rev. iii. 19. Be zealous and repent.* 'Tis that which St. John Baptist gave, when wrath was coming apace, and the *Axe was laid to the Root of the Tree.* *St. Matth. iii. 8. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* 'Tis that which our present *Parable* suggests: *If it bear fruit, Well: this will cause an Arrest of Judgment: this will procure the Repeal of the pronounced Sentence.*

In what words shall I propound this *Counsel*, with what *Arguments* may I so press it, as to render it effectual, with what *Motives* shall I inforce it, that it may be prevalent?

I have many things to say, when I come to apply the *Parable* personally, to urge you to *repent* to save your souls. And surely 'tis a great word, to *save our Souls*,
but

but may I not say, 'tis a greater word to save a *Church*, to save our *Religion*, in which, and by which, our Souls must be saved: and thousands, and millions of Souls may be saved, if that be saved, and may (humanely speaking) be lost for ever, if true *Religion* be lost; and if it be lost by our default, where shall the loss of all those souls be charged? How warmly, how Pathetically doth the great *Apostle* warn his dear *Timothy* in this affair, in a case of like concernment? And how doth he reiterate the charge to make all sure? O *Timothy* keep that which is committed to thy trust, 1 Tim. vi. 20. And 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love. And, That good thing which was committed to thee, keep by the holy Ghost. And he must transmit to others what was committed unto him. 2 Tim. ii. 2. The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. We owe to *Posterity*, what we received from our *Progenitours*. He leaves his name as a blot, nay as a curse to his descendents, who intercepts, and robs them of, the Care and Providence, and noble acquisitions of their common *Ancestours*.

And he deserves in the *Prophets* Phrase to be esteemed the *Tayl*, and not the *Head*, whose Lusts cut off, what the *Wisdom* and *Industry*, of great *Grand-Fathers* intayled of late, and far removed *Nephews*, for support and Honour. And how shall we answer it to God, our Consciences, and the succeeding *Ages*. If we sin away that *Holy Truth*, that excellent *Religion*, which God vouchsafed to Plant in this Nation, with his own Right Hand, and those from whom we had our lives transmitted to us, verdant and flourishing, being watered by their *Pious Tears*, and fatned with their dearest *Blood*? A *Religion* not patcht up of cunningly devised *Fables*, nor devised by cunning men, to gratifie their *Lusts*, and serve their base and worldly *Interests*. But the *Ever-Lasting Gospel*, brought by the *Eternal Son*, from the bosom of him, who is Truth it self, and the Fountain of it; and adapted to the promoting of his Glory, and the true Interest of Souls, the repairing, and restoring them to their highest perfection, Conformity to the *Divine Image*, participation of the *Divine Nature*, and full and endless injoyment of God. A *Religion* founded upon the *Prophets* and *Apostles*, having *Jesus Christ* for the chief Corner-

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ner-Stone. A Religion that dare bear the test of the true *Lydian-Stone*; The *Law* and *Testimony*, because it is not conscious to it self, of any counterfeit metal stamp and imposed on unwary minds, by its Authority, to pass for good Coyn, and currant mony. A Religion, which takes not away the *Key* of knowledge, nor deprives its *Children* of the *Scriptures*, the only Records of *Divine Truth*, and Rule that God hath given mankind, of Faith and Manners. That cries not up *Ignorance* for the Mother of *Devotion*, seeing *Solomon* hath told us, that without knowledge the heart cannot be good. And a greater than *Solomon*, That life eternal is to know God, and *Jesus Christ* whom he hath sent.

And one of his *Apostles* hath informed us, that *The new man is renewed in knowledge*, and another hath described the *Beasts Kingdom*, by its being full of *Darkness*. And our Lord in the beginning of his Ministry, laid down this early *Aphorism* to direct his Followers to distinguish, betwixt Truth and Falsehood, the way of Salvation, and condemnation, *John* iii. 19, 20, 21. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth*

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the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. A Religion that blots out none of Gods Commandments, for fear the very Children, should drink in with their Catechism, an Antidote against that gross Idolatry, which diffuses it self, through more than half the *Worship*, they are called to practise all their lives. A Religion which directs your Prayers to him, whose title is, *A God hearing Prayer*, and your *Worship* to him, to whom alone it appertains, and whom only we must serve: if either *Moses*, or *Christ*, are to be believed in such matters. And that teaches you to Pray to him in his name, whom Saint Paul calls the *One Mediatour betwixt God and Man*: being both in his own person. A Religion that allows you to serve this God, with reasonable service, as becomes reasonable Creatures, *Praying with your Spirits and your Understandings*, not like *Pyes* or *Parrots*; not with noise and sounds of a Language you understand not. A Religion that delivers Christs *Institutions*, as his *Apostles* receiv'd them from him; not disguising a *Sacrament*, appointed for the living, into an expiatory Sacrifice, for the

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the dead; nor bidding you *Worship*, what Christ bid you *eat*. Nor giving the *eye* to all your *Sences*, your *Reason*, and your *Faith*, together. (For Gods word which is the object of our Faith calls it *Bread* most frequently after Consecration) nor robbing you of one half, the *Cup*, with a *non obstante*, that Christ Instituted, and the *Primitive Church* Administred in both kinds. And so avowing their presumption with an impudence as villanous and hateful, as their theft. A *Religion* which hath no *Mint-house* to *Coin* new *Articles* of Faith, or make that needful to be believed, in order to Salvation, this year, which the year before, and ever before that, was never thought on: A *Religion* which dares neither add, nor detract from our Lords *Will*. Nor clap seven *Seals* to that *Testament*, to which he annexed but two *Labels*. A *Religion* which will neither allow you to *kill your King*, nor *eat your God*, nor purchase Heaven for your money, nor flatter you with hopes, that you may go to *Paradise* in the broad way; and have that done for you by others when you are dead, which should have been done by your self while you were alive. In a word, a *Religion* not made up of *Tricks and Artifices*; of *Pomp and Pageantry*

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try of a *Fardle* of unaccountable *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, and unintelligible mysteries and contradictions, to comply with all mens humours, tempers, constitutions: Severities for the Sower and Melancholy, *Carnivals* and *Stews* for the Airy, brisk and Sanguine. *Whips* and *Austere Discipline* (as sharp as the *Lancets* of *Baals Priests*) for the sullenly Superstitious. And easie *Indulgences*, and *Commutations* into gentle *Penances*, for the soft and delicate. A *Religion*, tho' profest and owned by many sinful men: yet neither invented, nor headed by the man of sin. But a *Religion* holy and undefiled, like its Author, plain and simple like the *Gospel*, which contains and teaches it. Spiritual and Heavenly like the place it leads them to, who love and practise it sincerely. Such is the *Religion* we yet enjoy, through Gods great goodness, but he threatens to bereave us of, for our sins against it. Let me therefore beseech you, and adjuce you, by all that's dear to you, be zealous and repent speedily, sincerely, that you force not a jealous God, to cut down this Tree, to remove his Kingdom, and take away his *Candlestick*, because you would not bring forth the *Fruits* of the one, nor walk in the *Light* of the other, and de-

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deprive your selves and your Posterity of the greatest blessing, God ever did, or can bestow on this or any other Nation on this side Heaven.

But I shall rather chuse to enlarge my self in that Application of this *Parable*, which is more suitable to so private an *Auditory*, tho I cannot deny, neither can any man deny, the former, in our circumstances, to be very seasonable, and therefore very necessary.

I shall therefore in what remains, consider the *Eig tree* as a *Figure* and *Type* of particular persons. Under which notion every individual man and woman, is sentenced to be cut down, and cast out of the *Vineyard* of the *Church*, by some Temporal or Spiritual Judgment: who hath been planted, and admitted into it by *Baptism*, and stands and grows in it, enjoying all the advantages and priviledges which belong to a Member of it, under the *Gospel*, and yet continues *Fruitless*, or bears no good Fruit. Gets no saving Knowledge, no true Faith, no sound Repentance, nor sincere Amendment of Life, No real sence, or favour of the things of God, in a prevalency of *Religion*, in Godliness and Holiness, against and above Formality, Prophaneness, or the love of this

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present world. No Justice, Righteousness, Truth and Honesty, against Deceiving, Couzenage, Oppression, Lying and Slandering of his Neighbours. No Temperance, Sobriety, subduing of his sensual Lusts and Appetites against Uncleaness, Drunkenness, Debauchery, and other defiling pleasures and sensualities. In a word, who are not foundly *Converted* and turned from placing their happiness and hopes in sin and creatures, to fix them on God and Christ, as their only blessedness and satisfying portion. Or in *St. Paul's* express *Language*, who will not learn that great *Lesson*, which the Grace of God, that is, the *Gospel* was revealed from Heaven, as the clearest light, to teach the Sons of men, that is, *To deny all ungodliness and worldly Lusts : and to live Righteously, Soberly and Godly in this present world*, in hope of a blessed immortality. Nor heartily, and in good earnest, endeavour to become such, as they are by their *Baptismal Vow* and *Covenant* obliged to be.

To every such man, to every such woman, I denounce this day in the name of the great, the dreadful God of Heaven and Earth, if thou *turn* not, and that *Speedily* and *thoroughly*; That God the
Lord

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Lord of Hosts, the supream, the Omnipotent, the Irresistible judg of all the Earth, *Hath prepared for thee, the instruments of death.* He hath whet his Sword, he hath bent and made ready his Bow, his Arrows are upon the string: suddenly will he shoot at thee, and not spare, or miss his mark. The Ax is laid to thy very Root, to cut thee down for fire unquenchable. God already despiseth, reproacheth, and upbraideth thee for cumbring of his Ground, hath actually pronounced the Sentence against thee, to cut thee down: the word is gone out of his mouth; only in admirable *Patience*, he hath reprieved thee *one year more*, a little longer, to try whether thou wilt yet at last sue out a *Pardon*, return, repent, amend, that thou mayst live. Yet if thou do it not quickly, he will compensate the former disappointments of his expectation, whilst year after year he came looking for *Fruit* and found none, together with the aggravated abuse of his *long-sufferance*, which vouchsafes another year, with a severer vengeance, with a greater Damnation.

As for our parts who are Gods *Ministers*, it is no pleasure nor delight to us, to be *Messengers* of so heavy tidings, to come on so harsh and terrifying an *Errand*.

We

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We had rather be sent on *Embassies of Peace*, and speak what might be more welcome and pleasing to you, provided it might also be profitable for you. But we must not chuse our own *Message*: but the Word God puts into our mouths, that must we speak. *What we have received from the Lord, that must we deliver to you*, according to our *Commission* and our *Instructions* written in his Word, must we proceed in the discharge and execution of our Office. We must not sow *Pillows under your Armpits*, nor dawb with untempered mortar, at the Price, at the Peril, of our own Souls. Nor promise *Life* where God hath threatned *Death*. Nor speak *Peace*, where God saith there is no *Peace*. And *there is no peace to the wicked*, saith my God, Isa. lvii. 21. This were but to betray you, and ruin our selves. To lead you *blindfold* into the *Ditch*, and plunge our selves in, together with you, into the *Lake of fire and brimstone*: and to have the guilt of the blood of your souls, added and heapt up, upon that of our own, to sink us deeper in the *bottomless Gulph*.

What we may do, and what we can do, that by the Grace of God we will do. We will Pray to God to let you alone *this year* also. Spare thy people good Lord, spare

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spare this and that other *Fruitless-Tree* one year more, try them *O Lord*, a little longer, it may be they will *consider*, it may be they will *bethink* themselves, it may be they will yet *bear Fruit*. And then, it shall be no *grief* of Heart to thee *O blessed Lord*, that thou didst not cut them off suddenly in thy sore displeasure. Many have made some amends for an *unfruitful youth*, by bringing forth more *Fruit* in their *Age*. Great *Sinners* have become great *Saints*.

What had thy *Church* lost, what had thy *Glory* lost, if thou hadst struck *Saul* dead, when thou didst strike him down; and he rose up a *Paul*? Lord let us humbly *claim*, what thou hast so graciously *Proclaimed*, and thou hast *Proclaimed* thy Name, thy own *Name*, to be the Lord, even the Lord *gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth*, *Exod. xxxiv. 6*. Yea so long-suffering that thou *Wouldest not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* *2 Pet. iii. 9*. to prevent their *perishing*. In this Sence we will, and to this Sence do, all good and faithful *Ministers* interceed with God for their people.

But we must not only *interceed* for you, but we must also *interceed* with you, in
Gods

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Gods behalf, *For we are Embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beseech you therefore in Christs stead be ye reconciled unto God, 2 Cor. v. 20.*

And we must not only intreat you; but we must treat with you, argue, debate, and reason out the case with you. *Why will you dye? Why will you not return, why will you forsake your own Mercies? Why will you lay out your mony for that which is not bread, and your strength for that which satisfieth not? Why will you prefer a broken Cistern, which will hold no water, before the Fountain of living water it self? Why will you chuse the puddle, of the impoysoned pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. Before the Healing Crystal Streams, Those Rivers of Pleasure, and fulness of Joy, which are at Gods Right-Hand for ever more? Yea we must add our hardest Labour, to our softest Prayers. And our dearer Cost to our cheaper Requests. We must dig about you and manure you. You are Gods Husbandry, and Building. And we must Till and Dress you, and Build you up to the utmost of our Skill and Industry. And tho this be not the Work of an hour or a day, but of our whole Life and Ministry. Yet suffer me to attempt*

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tempt it, so far as the time will bear.

And first I must Dig about you, that is, loosen and remove the *clung*, the *cold*, the *hard*, and *clutchy Loam*, and hungry Earth, from about your *Roots*, which *chil*, and *stunt*, and *starve* you, that you bear no *Fruit* in Gods *Vineyard*. That is, your indulged *Lusts*, and inordinate *Love* of the World, which by gnawing at your *Hearts*, spoyl both your *growth* and *fruitfulness*.

Your Carnal *security*, your ignorant and bold *presumptions*, your trusting in your outward *priviledges*, and false *confidences* in your *formal duties*, and *customary performances*; and *self-flatteries*, as to the sufficiency of your attainments, and good progress you reckon you have made.

All these, and many more, have an unhappy aptitude, to hinder your bearing *Fruit*, and make you *barren*, in some the *hardness* of the *Rock* prevents the taking *Root*. In others the *Thorns* draw away the good nourishment, or growing up about it, *Shade* and over drop it, keep away the *Sun* and *Weather*, and stifle and pinch it up, it hath no room to spread: The *cares* of the world, the *love* of riches, and the *lusts* of other things *choak* the seed, and the Plants,
that

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that they bring no Fruit to perfection, Mark iv. 19. In others, the overvaluing of their outward priviledges, as those Jews, *Jeremiah* writes of Chap. vii. Who cryed, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.* And those in our Saviours time *St. John* viii. *We are Abrahams seed, we have Abraham to our Father.* Or the Opinion of their attainments. Like the Church of *Laodicea*, *Rev.* iii. *Who said she was rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing.* Or boasting in their formal duties, as that *Pharisee*, *Luk.* xviii. *I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all I possess.* Or proud comparing your selves with some notorious, flagitious sinners, *I thank God I am not like such an one, nor do like such an one, nor like that Publican.* Some of these, or something like these, lies at the Root of most mens Hearts, and chills, or starves, or binds, or choaks them, that they bear no Fruit, nor answer Gods expectation, tho they have a standing in his Church.

So many now a days, and it may be some of your selves, are prone to say we are good Protestants, we are no Papists, no, nor we are no Phanaticks: But we are true Sons of the Church, we have been Baptised.

we.

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we keep our Church, we say our Prayers, we receive the Sacrament.

As if the outward washing would save you, without the answer of a good Conscience toward God; and making your Covenant with God, without the keeping of it. Or coming to Church without learning or practising what you are here taught, or calling upon God without departing from iniquity, and lifting up your hands, tho they be full of Blood, Bribes or Oppression. Or receiving the Sacrament without discerning the Lords Body, or considering what you do. Or standing in the Vineyard without bearing Fruit. When that is the very ground of Gods Controversie with you, and the thing that hastens your ruin, and you might stand longer in an Hedg-row, or on a Common, than in Gods inclosure.

Now as when the Gardiner digs about a Tree, it is to loosen the clung Earth, take away the bad, lay open the Roots, that he may lay better to them, as was toucht before, such must be the end of our Spiritual, our Ministerial digging about your Hearts. And as I conceive this expression, is equivalent to that of breaking up the fallow ground of the Heart, to Plow up the Weeds and Thorns, and make

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make it mellow and tender to receive the Seed: as that must be done by the *Plough* of the *Law*, so must this with the *Spade* of the *Law*. *Docendo, monendo, convincendo, redarguendo*, by teaching, admonishing, convincing, reproving, threatening, as a good *Expositor* expresseth it, which are all the proper works of the *Law*.

That we may therefore apply our selves rightly to this work. In the 29th. of *Deuteronomy*, verse 18. we read of a root bearing gall and wormwood, very bad, very bitter *Fruit*, and the next verse describes him to be one, that *bleffeth himself in his heart, and saith he shall have peace, tho he add drunkenness to thirst*, and the 12. verse before, and the 25. after seems to intimate the grounds or occasion of that his confidence, because he was entred into *Covenant* with God. As if that would secure him from danger, Now I beseech you observe with what *Spade* *Moses* himself digs about this Root, verse 20. *The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoeke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lye upon him: And the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall*

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shall separate him unto evil, out of all the Tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the Covenant that are written in the Book of this Law. Read what follows at your leisure, as also *Deut. xxviii.* more largely from verse xv. to the end, which contains 54. verses : and many more heavy curses, and dreadful threatnings, according to what he speaks, *Deut. xxxii. 23.* I will heap mischiefs upon them. And so *Levit. xxvi.* he threatens them with most severe Judgments, and tells them he will punish them seven, and seven, and seven times more for their sins, unless they repent and amend : Till he pluckt them up by the very roots, out of the good land wherein he had planted them. And in the same method do all the Prophets proceed, as were easie to give instances in Samuel, Davids Psalms most frequently, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the rest, and the same instruments do they all use to the same end : but I leave a thing so very obvious to your own observation in reading of the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

And the New Testament, in this, is like the Old. You cannot but take notice, how John the Baptist begins his Ministry, *Matth. iii.* Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and how doth he urge them so to do ?

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do? First by digging away that bad Earth from about their Roots: their flattering themselves with a false confidence in their outward priviledges. *Think not to say we have Abraham to our Father*: and then by threatning them with cutting down. *The Ax is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall, nay, is hewen down and cast into the fire.* He speaks of it as done already, to convince them of the certainty of it. And again, *One is coming after him, mightier than he, and his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable.* And nothing is more frequent in the Sermons and Parables of our Lord himself, than such usefull and faithful severity, to awaken secure sinners, by such wholesome comminations of their danger: as every attentive reader may observe. To touch a few of very many; *Matth. xi. 20.* *Then began he to upbraid the Cities in which most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo to thee Chorazin, wo to thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon*

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Sidon in the day of Judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven (by the injoyment of such means) shall be brought down to hell: (for the abuse of them) For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of Judgment than for thee.. What stinging words are these, how should they awaken us to speedy Repentance?

This is also the scope of many of the Parables in *Matth. xiii.* of the Sower and the Seed, of the Drag Net, of the Tares: to instance in the last. The Tares in the Field, seem to run parallel with the barren figtree in the Vineyard, verse 40. the Tares are burnt in the fire. The son of man shall send forth his Angels and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity and cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. His Kingdom, that is his Church: and you see 'tis not enough to be in his Kingdom, but to be a Loyal Subject in his Kingdom, and to yield him willing and faithful Obedience, and such is the case with him who wanted the Wedding Garment, *Matth. xxii.* and with

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with the *foolish Virgins*, that provided no Oyl, and the *slothful servants* that traded not with his *Talent*, Matth. xxv. So Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is Baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, tho he were Baptised, yea, the more because he was Baptised, and did not what he was thereby obliged to.*

But no where more fully than in the beginning of this Chapter. *Unless you repent you shall all perish, and besides my Text, verse 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, and that quickly before the Master of the house be risen, for it will afterwards be in vain, to plead, we have Eat and Drunk in thy presence, come to thy Table, heard thee Preach. If you have been workers of iniquity hee'l say, depart from me.*

And the *Holy Apostles*, the most skillful, and most faithful Labourers in Gods Vineyard, use the same method, warning the unfruitful by the terrors of the Lord. By this Goad St. Peter prickt, and by this Sword St. Stephen cut, their several hearers to the heart: with these Weapons St. Paul managed his warfare To pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan, Rom. i. 18. He tells them *The wrath of God is revealed*

from

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from Heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. Rom. ii. tells them that they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, who are not led to repentance by Gods long-suffering and goodness, and threatens, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anger, upon every soul of man that doth evil: and lets them know, their outward Circumcision will avail them nothing, unless their hearts be Circumcised. And Chap. xi. He warns them by the Example of the Jewish Branches being cut off from their Olive Tree, and bids them take heed lest God also spare not them, and expressly tells them that if they continue not in Gods goodness, answer not his goodness towards them, they also shall be cut off. 'Tis hard to forbear offering more, but I confess it rather needs an *Apology* for saying so much, in so manifest a case, than an *Excuse* for saying no more, yet they that consider for how plain a people these things were first prepared, and now written, may pass by the error, if I have exceeded.

And now to dig the deeper about you, even to the bottom of your Roots, to the very Root of your Hearts: let me usher in what I have to offer to you, with these considerations.

First,

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First, You stand not on an *Heath* or *Furrest*, OR a *Wilderness* or *Common*, in a *Wood* or *Hedge-row*, where you might stand long, and none look after you, neither God nor Man expect fruit from you. *The times, the places of Ignorance*, when and where men have not the *light* of the *Gospel*, to shew them their *Duty*, or their *Danger* in neglecting it, *God winketh at*, *Acts* 17. 30. takes less notice of But when and where his *Gospel* is vouchsafed, *He calls all men to repent*. Because, by that, he lets them know *He hath appointed a man*, by whom he will judge the *World* in *Righteousness*, and hath given full assurance of it, by raising him from the *Dead*. But you are planted in a rich *Soil*: as God's *Vineyard* of old, *Isa.* 5. 1. in a very fruitful hill, cultivated, dressed, tilled with no small cost and care, it was *digged*, and *fenced*, and the *Stones* picked out. You live in a *Church* where you enjoy the *Holy Scriptures* to be a *light* to your *Feet*, and *lamp* to your *Paths*; and have the truth and excellency of the *Gospel*, fully set forth, and plainly preached, explained and applyed to you, and the whole counsel of God, concerning your *Eternal* estate, declared, and nothing kept back, which may be necessary or profitable for you.

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you: You have the *Holy Sacraments* Administred to you, according to Christs Institution, without maiming, or defiling them, with mens Superstitious inventions added. You have *Prayers* made in a Tongue you understand, and directed to him alone, who stiles himself a *God* bearing Prayer, and in his *Mediation*, who is the true and only *Mediatour*, in whose name we are allowed, and commanded to ask, what we need; with assurance given, that it shall be granted. And whatever else that's requisite to promote your *Sanctification*, *Consolation* and *Salvation*, even all the means of Grace, which he hath appointed, that was faithful in all his house. A *Mercy* so invaluable, that all other mercies of Life and Health, of Peace and Plenty, are greatly inferiour to it, and nothing but *Heaven* it self exceeds, or is above it.

Secondly, You have stood a long time in this *Vineyard*, lived a great while in such a *Church*. Not three years only, but more than three times three, yea threescore years many of you, and all of you many, tho not so manyall. And know that the longer you have stood, and the oftner God hath come to look for Fruit, the greater your account will be, and the nearer cut-

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ing

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ing down you are: and if you mend not, if you repent not, now speedily and thoroughly, the more sudden, hasty, sure, sore, and dreadful will your cutting down be.

Thirdly, The more cost and pain hath been bestowed upon you, the heavier, the stricter reckoning you must be called to, and the severer vengeance will God inflict, if you continue to receive his Grace in vain, and with obstinate security *delay* to bring forth *Fruit*.

Fourthly, If after long ordinary means enjoyed, fresh alarms be given, and new and more vigorous calls and applications be made to you, by *extraordinary dispensations* of Gods Providence, and other circumstances he brings you under, which are like the letting it alone *another year*, after Sentence given to cut it down, for the three former years *barrenness*: and these be lost, and prove as unsuccessful as those which went before them: then you *perish* inevitably without remedy, without excuse, or any pitty. For

First, God will do no more, *It shall not be digged nor pruned any more*, Isa. v. 6. Whatever God doth, he doth with respect to his *Mercy* or his *Justice*, they are *Principia imperantia in Deo*, as the Schools speak;

speak; they engage, and set all his *Attri-
 butes* on work, as his *Wisdom* and *Power*,
 &c. and all he doth, is for the *glory* ei-
 ther of his *Mercy* or his *Justice*: and when
 neither of them can be farther glorified:
 then he *ceases* to work, and will pro-
 ceed no farther, do no more. And such
 is the case here, neither of them would
 be glorified by his doing more for such
 men: and therefore *Mercy* is not for it,
 and *Justice* is against it. His *Mercy* hath
 hath been hitherto glorified, in iagaging
 his *Wisdom* to use such variety of means
 and methods, to bring them to repen-
 tance; and his *patience* in allowing so much
 time, to see what the *effect* would be; but
 to continue always to do so, and longer
 to do so, when abundantly enough hath
 been vouchsafed, to magnifie his *Mercy*,
 both in his *Wisdom* and his *Patience*, he
 will then give over. And to go on still;
 would but be to *expose* his *Wisdom* to cen-
 sure, and his *Patience* to contempt. He will
 not be always trying *conclusions* in vain,
 and to no purpose, after he hath done
 abundantly enough to manifest, yea mag-
 nifie, his *Mercy* in the Eyes of all impar-
 tial witnesses; and *excuse* his *Justice* in
 what he shall inflict, by leaving them in-
 excusable, on whom he shall inflict it. As

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he saith to the incorrigible, *Why should you be stricken any more, you will revolt more and more.* Isa. i. 5. Seeing you are like the *Anvil*, which grows *harder* the more blows are laid upon it. So to the *indocible*, and *impenitent*, why should ye be taught, called on, warned, reprov'd any more, seeing ye refuse to learn, hearken, take warning and return? Why should the *Word of the Lord* be precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, to those who have made a covenant with death, and are at an agreement with hell? Who have made *Lyes* their refuge, and have hid themselves under falsehood, unless that they might go, and fall backward, and be snared, and taken, Isa. xxviii. 13, 15.

And why any more *vain endeavours* to charm them, who have made themselves like the *deaf Adder* which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely, whose doom is therefore to be taken away suddenly, both living and in his wrath, Psal. lviii. 4, 5, 9. Why any more *Piping* to them who will not *Dance*, or *mourning* to them who will not weep, Luk. vii. 32. Who will be won, neither by *promises* nor *threats*, overcome neither by *hopes* nor *fears*, nor gained, as we say, either by *fair means*, or by *foul*.

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How oft would I have gathered you as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not: such shall be left desolate, Luke xiii. He will not always Cluck them, nor offer them his shelter any more, those whom he hath often called and they would not answer, he will call no more. Nay he will not answer when they call to him. Abused *Patience* will turn into *Fury* and 'tis fit *Justice* should have its turn, and at length take place on them, who have long despised *Mercy*.

Secondly, He can do no more. *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Isa. v. 4. All hath been done, that *Art* and *Industry*, and the best *Husbandry* can do; and all that, in that respect, it is capable of having done for it.

The Scope of the *Parable*, is to shew the care and faithfulness of the *Planter*, and the *Dresser* of the *Vineyard*; to whom it belongs to give good *Tillage* and *Culture*, and to perform what's to be done below on Earth: but not to send Rain and seasonable Weather, or the kind and needful influences of Heaven, and it must not be stretcht too far, nor applied to the internal Operations of the *Holy Ghost*. Nor to limit the extraordinary power of

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God: as if by his Almighty Grace, he could absolutely have done no more, to make his *Vineyard Fruitful*. For in a *Parallel* case, we are told, *He is able to raise children to Abraham, out of stones*, and he that hath promised *To take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh*; must not be denyed Ability, to do it when, and for whom he pleaseth.

But it is to be restrained to, and understood of, the *external* means of Grace, and Gods *ordinary* power exerted in, and by them, And in as much, as no part or degree of them had been wanting, but all vouchsafed, that God *ordinarily* doth, or can afford: it is said, he had done all he could. And possibly it may be thus expressed, tacitely to convince men, who are prone to think outward means alone *sufficient*. And believe they can, by the help of them alone, *turn to God*, and become *fruitful*, if they please, and when they please. And are thereby left *self-condemned*, because God hath done his part, (and all themselves esteem needful) and they neglect their own; and perform not what they know they ought, and think they can.

Thirdly, His *Intercessours* desire him to do no more but cease, become silent, and plead.

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plead no longer. And you know when an *Advocate* yields and throws up his *Clients Cause*, he is in a sad case, his business is lost. 'Tis express and plain in the *Text* if he will please to spare it another year, and bestow more cost and pains on it, hee'l ask no more; if it bear not fruit then, cut it down and spare not. Neither *Christ* in Heaven, nor his *Ministers* on Earth, have one word more to say for a people whom neither ordinary, nor extraordinary means, will make better. 'Tis usual to ask a Prisoner why Sentence should not be given, and when neither he nor his *Council*, can alledg any, then *Judgment* is given, and *Execution* follows. So here when they who had pleaded for them, can plead, will plead no longer, because they have no *Plea* left: then the Case is desperate, there is no hope. As long as *Abraham* interceded for *Sodom*, God granted what he requested. But as soon as he left, God proceeds to execute vengeance. When there is no man to make up the *Hedg*, or stand in the *Gap* before God for the *Land*, that he should not destroy it, then he pours out his indignation upon it, and consumes it with the fire of his wrath. *Ezech. xxii. 30, 31.*

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Fourthly, God himself forbids them to Pray for such men. Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, Jer. vii. 16. Now consider what people this was. Even the Trees of his own Planting in his own Vineyard. His own People who profess the true Religion, but abused that Profession, and made it a Cloak for their villainies. As if that pretext had given them a Licence to commit their Abominations. but the better their Religion, the worse shall they speed, who Prophane it, defile it, and by not bearing the genuine Fruits of it, but the contrary, cause it to be evil spoken of, and that God to be Blasphemed, who was the Author of it. The whole place, tho exceeding apposite to our purpose, is too large to be transcribed, Jer. vii. 4. to the 17. Trust ye not in lying words saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these; this repeating it so often, shews the height of their confidence, but this will not do, unless they thoroughly amend their ways and doings.— then verse 8. Behold you trust in lying words, that cannot profit. This will not secure you, will ye steal, murder, commit adultery and swear falsely— and come and stand before

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before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations. Is this house become a den of Robbers in your Eyes? But go to Shiloh and see what I did to them for their wickedness, and he do as bad, or worse, to you for yours, Because I spake to you rising early, and you heard not, and I called and you answered not. Therefore I'll cast you out of my sight. Then follows Therefore pray not thou for them, &c. As if he should say to us, you mightily deceive your selves, and trust in lying words, and which will not profit you, to have you spared: If you say, we are Baptised, we are true Protestants, we keep our Church, &c. And think this will excuse you, in the neglect of bearing the Fruits your Baptism obliges you to, and your Holy Religion exacts of you, and presume to do quite contrary. And tho I have long lookt for better from you, and long called you to amendment, and have been intreated by my Servants to spare you, again and again, but I see 'tis all to no purpose, therefore I am resolved to spare you no longer, nay I charge all that love me, to speak no more for you that you should be spared. See also Jer. xi. 14, 17.

Where we have the very Metaphor of

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my Text, *A green Olive-tree planted, but evil pronounced against it, by him that planted it, and prayer forbidden to be made for it.*

Fifthly, If they do pray for them he will not hear: he tells them so to stop their mouths: *I will not hear thee, Ezek. 14. 14. tho these three men, Noah, and Daniel, and Job stood before me, as I live, saith the Lord, they should deliver neither son nor daughter.* Such men, mighty in power, whom one would think should obtain any thing, and God would deny them nothing, even they should not prevail for a people who had sinned against God by trespassing grievously, *vers. 13.* Had grieved him by long resisting his Calls, by impenitency; and had set up their idols in their hearts, and the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces.

Sixthly, Nay, they who have interceded for you, that you might be spar'd; yea, and prevail'd for you, that you have been spar'd: will turn their prayers against you, if after all his sparings of you, they see you will not turn to God, but continue obstinate, they will pray God to rid his Church of you, as the bane, as the pests of the place you live in, who by your bad example, and bad coun-

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but that to be a he stop zek. and live, the in uke eny ore- inst 13. his up ling er- d; ou er- of od, ay he in, n- l, fel, and other mischiefs you do, hinder other sinners from returning. How doth holy *Jeremiah*, who had stood before the Lord to speak good for that people, at length not only desist and cease praying for them; but chap. 11. 20. cries against them, *Let me see thy vengeance on them.* And *Elijah* makes intercession against *Israel*, Rom. 11. 2. for their unfruitfulness, and corrupting their Religion: and when they who used to hold God's hands, and to whom he saith, *Let me alone that I may destroy them*, Deut. 9. 14. not only let loose his hands, but let loose their own prayer against them. What shall become of such a People?

Seventhly, Nay, your own mouths will be stopped, and you will be speechless, and as before you had no heart to use the arguments, you might have pleaded for your selves, so now you will have no arguments to plead, nothing to say, but will be out of countenance, wholly, and quite ashamed to hold up your heads before God. As the man, Mat. 22. whom God had used so kindly, whom he calls Friend, *Quem tot bonis, & donis coronavit*, whom he had crowned and compassed with so many opportunities and helps, to get what he had, so grossly neglected to provide

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provide; when he might have had it; and knew he ought to have had it: when he ask'd him, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment, he was speechless.* He had nothing to say for himself, not a word to offer for arresting the severest Judgment, He that after several *Admonitions*, goes on to sin, is to be *rejected* of God and man, being *condemned* of himself, *Tit. 3. 11.* And they who have *means* to know God, and will not know him, and when they do know him, will not glorify him, nor bring forth the *Fruits*, by which others might be provok'd to glorify him, are without excuse. *Rom. 1. 20.*

Eightly. But if they add *impudence* to their *obstinacy*, and will presume to call upon him; and their *extremity* exert, and wring from them a prayer at last, and they *howl* to him on their Beds, as God speaks reproachfully of such mens prayers, *Hos. 7. 14.* and their *fears* fright them into a pang of heartless devotion, and the sense of approaching ruine, scare them to cry to that God, who hath so long call'd earnestly on them to turn, but all in vain: it shall now be as much in vain on their parts: for he is resolv'd, he will not hear them. *Prov. 1. 28.* They shall

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shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, because they hated knowledge, and despised reproof. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes, and when you make many prayers I will not hear. Isa. 1. 15. Read on, and see the reason, Eze. 8. 18. I will deal in my fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and tho they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, I will not hear. And Zach. 7. 11, 12, 13. They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopp'd their ears, that they should not hear: yea, they made their hearts as an Adamant Stone, lest they should hear the Law, and the words which the Lord of Hosts sent by his spirit in the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: therefore it is come to pass, that as he cryed and they would not hear: so they cryed, and I would not hear saith the Lord of Hosts. Consider this, ye that forget God. And in the days of your youth, and health, and strength go on securely in the ways of your own hearts, and despise admonition and refuse to return, and think in your selves, if you have but time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, at last, all shall be well, and you shall be as safe, as they that soonest turn to God, and sought him timely with their

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their best endeavours, and sincerest hearts.

Ninthly. God will take away the very means from them who trust in the formal customary fruitless use of them. We find this Sentence four times recorded. From him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath: twice in the parable of the Sower, as the doom of the barren ground. Matth. 13. 12. Luke 8. 18. twice in the parable of the pounds and talents as the punishment of the slothful, unprofitable servant. Matt. 25. 19. and Luke 19. 26. The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof; Mat. 21. 43. which plainly sheweth the reason to be their not bringing forth such fruits. And the Church of Ephesus is threatned. Rev. 2. 5. Repent and do thy first works, or I will come upon thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of its place except thou repent. You may sin away a good Religion by your unfruitfulness: but the best Religion will not keep away vengeance from those who are unfruitful, but draw it on the faster.

Tenthly, or he will take his blessing from the means, his spirit shall not accompany them, and then they will be but a dead

Letter.

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Letter without life and quickning For the word preach'd will not profit them in whom 'tis not mixt with faith; and faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit: and he will not work it in those who resist him, quench him, grieve him, provoke him; nor strive longer with them, who set themselves to strive against him, and harden their hearts, as it were on purpose, to withstand, and hinder his making any impressions on them: those who have long received God's Grace in vain, and turned it into wantonness, may sit under the sound of it, but shall find no efficacious influence by it, and tho to others, as Christ speaks, Cant. 1. 16. Our bed is green fruitful, and Children are begotten unto God, yet to them the Ordinances have a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.

Eleventhly. God will turn the means thou injoyest, to thy hurt, and to thy raine, to become a curse, a snare, and stumbling block, and occasion of falling, to the aggravating of thy condemnation, Rom. 11. 9. David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block and a recompence unto them. As meat which is not digested to yield good nourishment, breeds crudities, and turns to be occasion of Disease. So doth Spirit

that

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and Food, when not improv'd to growth and strength. As the *Manna* corrupted bred worms, so *spiritual Manna* breeds the most stinging worm of Conscience, when abused. The sincere milk of the word, curdled in the sour stomach of an hard heart, breeds the most dangerous, and deadly *Obstructions*: and becomes the savour of death. *Unworthy Receivers* eat and drink their own damnation: and turn the Seal of God's precious promises, into a Seal of his dreadful Threatnings: yea, which is most fearful to consider, *Christ Jesus* himself becomes a stumbling to some men: even to those, who seek righteousness, not by faith, but, as it were, mark the phrase, as it were, by the works of the Law: not downright seeking Justifications, by the works of the Law, but turn the Gospel into a Law, to be justified by Evangelical Works, as if they were to be justified by a Law requiring Works, not by the Gospel, offering Righteousness, of God's meer Grace, in Christ to be received by faith.

And 1 Cor. 1. 23. *Christ crucified* is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And 1 Pet. 2. 8. A stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, to them who are disobedient to the word. And

it

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it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have refused to walk in it. Not to have had Christ offered to them, than to have rejected him, not to enjoy the means, than to have them blasted and cursed to them, through their own default and provocation.

Twelfthly. God will avenge your sinful hardning your selves, in your willful neglecting and deferring to repent, and bring forth the fruits of true Christianity, by a penal and judiciary hardning, not by infusing any malice and wickedness into your hearts. The holy God neither can, nor will do that; for he is not the Author of that, of which he is the author and punisher. But by leaving you to your own corruptions, without restraint, and to those temptations which are apt to kindle, and are fit fuel for those corruptions. God will leave you to your own choice. Isa. 66. 3, 4. They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: therefore I also will chuse their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them: because when I called, none did answer, when I spake they would not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

There is scarce one passage, in all the Bible,

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Bible, repeated so often over in *terminis*, as that dreadful *Sentence*, first denounced from the mouth of God, by the Ministry of the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 6. 10. and to which he was prepared, with so great and awful *Solemnity*. By a *Vision* of the *Divine Majesty*, upon the *Throne* of his *Glory*, and an *Angel* touching his Lips with a coal from the *Altar*, and with a special *Commission*, to send him on this *Errand*. Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed but understand not: see ye indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed. Which we find repeated, as the *Margin* of your *Bibles* will shew, *Matth.* 13, 14, 15. *Mark* 4. 12. *Luke* 8. 10. *John* 12. 40. in all which places our *Lord* himself applies it, and with such variety, as would afford us very useful remarks, but I leave them to be made by your own *Observation*: then *Acts* 28. 26. *S. Paul* improves it very fully, and having rehearsed the words at large, draws a sad inference from them; verse 28. Be it known therefore to you, that the *Salvation* of God is sent unto the *Gentiles*, and they will hear it. Than which, nothing

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nothing could have been spoken, more cutting to the *Jews*, who so despised and hated the *Gentiles*, and implies, that God's Salvation, that is, his *Word, Truth*, the true *Religion*, should now be taken from them, (for hitherto *Salvation* was of the *Jews*, John 4. 22.) for their obstinate unfruitfulness; and given to the *Gentiles* who would receive it, and is but the interpretation, and confirmation, of our *Saviours* own words before touch'd; *The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And we find it again, Rom. 11. 8. they were blinded, according as it is written, *God hath given them a spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see, &c.* Nothing can be more terrible, and affrighting than this threat, to any man who will consider and weigh it, and the enforcing it so oft, may awaken even them that are asleep in the deepest security, if this doom be not already executed against them, and it hath actually seized upon them.

And I might refer you to many more of the like dreadful import in both *Testaments*; but I'll content my self with one in each. Ezek. 24. 12, 13, 14. *She hath wearied her self with lyes; and her great scum*

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Jeſum went not forth out of her : In thy filthi-
neſs is lewdneſs, becauſe I have purged thee,
and thou waſt not purged ; thou ſhalt not be
purged from thy filthineſs any more, till I
have cauſed my fury to reſt upon thee : I the
Lord have ſpoken it, it ſhall come to paſs,
and I will do it, I will not go back, I will not
ſpare, neither will I repent ; according to thy
ways, and according unto thy doings, ſhall they
judge thee, ſaith the Lord God. Words ſo
exaggerated, ſo keen, ſo pungent, they
will pierce your hearts and move you, if
they be not harder than the *nether Mill-
ſtone* ; yea, may penetrate the heart that is
ſo hard, if the head, if the mind of the man,
in whom it is, will dwell a little upon the
meditation, the conſideration of them.

The place in the New Teſtament, I
would refer you to, is that *pathetick*
word of our Saviour, recorded in the end
of the Chapter, where my Text is : O
Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, which killeſt the pro-
phets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto
thee, how often would I have gathered thy
children together, as an hen gathereth her
brood under her wings, and ye would not. Be-
hold your houſe is left unto you deſolate. I
have met with as improper *Alluſions*, and
Paraphraſes, tho I will not avow ſuch an
one, as it would be, ſhould I gloſs upon
theſe

these words! thus; O sumers, sinners, who have killed your Ministers with their study, pains, and travel to bring you to repentance, and yet you would not repent: who have broken the hearts of them, whom I sent to you, by the stony-ness of your hearts, how often, how fain, would I have gathered you to my self, have turn'd you from your sinful courses, and ye would not: therefore I'll now trouble my self no more with you, I'll give you up to your own hearts lusts, fill up the measure of your iniquities, that wrath may come upon you without measure, even to the utmost.

Lastly, To add no more, God will sharpen the edge, and envenom the point of his Sword of vengeance, by joyning contempt to his wrath, and scornful derision to the soreness of his fiery indignation, laughing at your destruction, and mocking when your fear comes upon you. And a great mind can bear smart better than reproach, and pain more easie than derision. Reproach will break those hearts with vexing sorrow, which all the words of God could not break with Godly Sorrow. He that sits in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Plal.

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Pfal. ii. 4. The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming, Psal. xxxvii. 13. And there is nothing more astonishingly sad than Gods laughing, when with a iust insulting he cryes Ah ha, I will ease me of my adversaries. I will avenge me of my enemies, Isa. i. 24.

These are some few of those many *Righteous Comminations*, of those *affrighting menaces*, by which the *Spade* of the Law is steeled, to dig about your *Roots*, and remove the cold and hungry Earth from them, which causes your barrenness in Gods *Vineyard*. These are the *Share* and *Coulter* of that *Plough*, by which we must *break up the Fallow-ground* of your *Hearts*: to kill the *Thorns* and *Weeds*, which choak the good *Seed* of the *Word*. Any one of them might, and should suffice to do the work, yet that they may profit you jointly, which have not done it singly. Take them in one view, it may be an whole *volly* may strike down that *security*, which would not fall before a *single shot*. I exhort you, I beseech you, I adjure you therefore, by all these put together, and by what ever else Gods *Holy Spirit* may suggest to your own *Consciences*, of greater force and cogency. Repent, and bring forth *fruits meet*

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meet for Repentance, speedily, readily, faithfully, under those abundant helps, God affords you by the Gospel, and his Patience, which you have almost tired out, yet continues, a little longer to you. For, I assure you in his name.

1. God will do no more.
 2. God can do no more.
 3. Your kindest Intercessours will ask no more for you.
 4. God charges them they should not.
 5. He hath told them, he will not grant it, tho they do.
 6. They will turn their Prayers against you, if you turn not.
 7. Your own mouths will be stopt.
 8. Or be opened in vain, for God will not regard your too late requests.
 9. God will take the means away you yet enjoy.
 10. Or he will take away his Spirit and Blessing from them.
 11. Or which is still worse, blast and curse them to you.
 12. And avenge your long sinful hardness with final and judicial hardning.
- And Lastly, Will expose you to eternal ignominy, and himself deride your folly.

But

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But I must not only *dig* about you, but *Manure* you, not only apply the *Corrosives* of the *Law*, but the *Cordials* of the *Gospel*. Not only *Thunder*, could I do it, like a *Boanerges*, but like a *Barnabas*, both *Shine* and *Rain* upon you, those *Consolations*, which may refresh and chear you: Not only rip up your *Breasts*, and cut you to the *Hearts* with the *Sword* of Gods dreadful threatnings: but pour in the *Balm of Gilead*, into those *Wounds* that *Sword* hath made, to close and heal them. Not only use the *Spade* and *Mattock*, but such *Tools*, call them by what names you please, by which fresh amendment, warm and tender Mould, and mellow Earth, of a cherishing prolifick Nature may be applied to your *Roots*, to the very *Roots* of your *Hearts* and *Consciences*. I mean the tender *Mercies* of our God; his great and pretious *Promises*: the warm and cherishing *blood* of Jesus Christ.

Supposing therefore, and 'tis my Heart's desire and Prayer to God, that it prove not a false supposition; that what hath been said already, hath removed what might hinder, and hath laid bare your *Roots*, and made them open to receive the influence of what's yet to follow. I now in the name of that God whose name

is

is recorded, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* As proclaimed by himself to be the Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; tho he will by no means acquit the guilty: the wilfully impenitent, the stubbornly unfruitful. Who keepeth mercy for thousands, of them that turn to him, love him and keep his Commandments. Whose word it is: that When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed: and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions, that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not dye, *Eze. xviii. 27, 28.* In the name of that God whose mercy endureth for ever, as David tells us twenty six times in one *Psalme cxxxvi.* Who not only sheweth Mercy, but delighteth in mercy. See the three last verses of the Prophet Micah, who not only saith, but sweareth, and that by himself, because he can swear by no greater: and sweareth by that which is greatest in himself, and dearest to himself, if any thing be greater, or dearer than other, that is by his Life, and by his Holiness. As I live saith the Lord God,

I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But that the wicked turn from his way and live, turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye dye O house of Israel, Eze. xxxiii. 11. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lye unto David, Psal. lxxxix. 35. to his people that accept his Covenant, therefore the Covenant of Grace is called the Sure mercies of David. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. iii. that is, with those that encline their Ears and come to him, that hear that their souls may live.

This God I say desireth not the death of the greatest sinner amongst you, nor the cutting down of the barrenest tree in all his Vineyard. But calls you with the most pressing importunity, and invites you with the most indubitable assurance, to turn to him, and that if you do so, you shall not dye.

To you who have been so long Fruitless, in so rich a Soyl, Planted on so very fruitful hills, upon Mount Sion, his Holy Hill his Church, his Gospel Church. Who have disappointed Gods expectation so often, so many years, as he hath come

come to look for *Fruit*, and have sent him away disappointed, grieved, provoked, because he found none. To you, and such as you I say. Behold! Behold and wonder, wonder to amazement, to astonishment, at his superabounding goodness, and unwearied patience, that

First, He hath spared you to another year, notwithstanding not only your own forfeitures, and provocations by your past *unfruitfulness*, and the condemning Sentence which they extorted from him against you. But also the subtle *Conspiracies*, the bold *designs*, the cruel and restless *machinations* of the Enemies of his Gospel, and your lives. Who in their proud hopes, and wicked purposes, had swallowed up all, and rooted up the whole *Vineyard*, and laid it desolate with all that grows therein, and you amongst the rest long since.

Secondly, He yet continues to bestow more cost and pains upon you, he is yet waiting to be gracious to you, he keeps up his Fence about his *Vineyard*, his double Fence. The *Wall* and *Hedge*, a Christian *Magistracy*, a Gospel *Ministry*, he yet causes you to enjoy the labours of the Dressers of his *Vineyard*. He yet employs laborers to *Dress*,

to Prune, to Husband, to Cultivate those Plants, he might in justice have stubbed up long since. O admirable patience! O adorable Compassions, from which alone it is that we are not consumed! Let me apply to the Lords patience, what in another respect the Apostle speaks concerning mans, *let patience have its perfect work*. Let it lead us to Repentance, and while we continue Planted by the River side, by that stream which makes glad the City of God. Let us bring forth our Fruit in due season.

Thirdly, He declares himself willing to forget and forgive our past unfruitfulness, *if it bear fruit, well, yet, yet after so long bearing none, if yet at last it thrive, under this last tryal, and answer this new husbandry bestowed upon it, it shall stand. He shall surely live, he shall not dy.* God will blot out all your iniquities out of his remembrance. *Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, come now let us reason together* saith the Lord: *tho your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow: tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll,* Isa. i. 16, 17, 18.

Fourthly,

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Fourthly, To assure our *Faith*, how all this may be done, and that it shall be done assuredly, he hath provided a security for his *own glory*. That we may attain all this, and yet he *lose* nothing, by conferring it upon us. Our *Hearts* would sink, and fail within us, and our *Hands*, our *Faith* could not be strong, if God were to *lose*, by what we hope to *gain*. if the *receiving* us to *glory*, must be by the *eclipsing* of his *own glory*. For he will never *diminish* that, for the advancement of which, all things were made by him, and for the sake of which, he doth all that he doth, or ever will do, that therefore his *Mercy* may be thus *magnified* safely, he hath provided how his *Justice* may be *satisfied* fully, and all his other *Attributes* retain their lustre and their brightness. He hath therefore raised up for us a mighty *salvation* in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of all his Holy Prophets since the world began. And to give us the clear knowledge of *salvation*, by the remission of our sins: through the tender mercies of our God the day spring from on high hath visited us. He hath devised means, to bring home his *banished*, that they should not for ever be *expelled* from himself: that we may be delivered from go-

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ing down to the pit. *He hath found a ransom.*
He hath laid help upon one that is mighty, able
to save to the utmost, all those that come to God
by him. He spared not his own Son, but gave
him to be a ransom for us, made him to be
sin (that is a sin offering) for us, that we might
become the righteousness of God in him, yea
made him a curse for us, bear that curse
of the Law, which we had deserved, that
we might be delivered from it. God hath
set forth his Son Jesus Christ, to be a propi-
tiation through faith in his blood. And he
is gone into Heaven to appear in the presence
of God for us, so that if any man sin, we
have an Advocate with the Father Jesus
Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation for
our sin; and therefore If we confess our
sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us
our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ his
Son cleanseth us from all sin. And he hath
revealed him to us, and publisht these
glad tidings to us in his Gospel, which takes
its name, its denomination hence, be-
cause in it, and by it, is made known to
us those glad tidings of great joy, that
the Son of God is become the Son of
man, is now Emanuel, God with us, to be
a Saviour to us.

Fifthly, He makes us the most free,
kind, pathetick invitations, to come to
him,

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him, to look unto him and be saved. He bids us to a *Feast of fat things*, which he hath slain and prepared, and of *choice Wine*, *Wine upon the lees well refined*. You shall scarce any where amongst men, tho the dearest to one another, and most delighted in each others conversation, meet with so passionate, so restless an importunity, as is exprest to bring in Guests to the *Wedding Feast*, Matth. xxii. and Luk. xiv. First a previous *invitation* before hand, then a *liberal* and sumptuous *preparation*, which might allure any man to partake of it. Then a sending forth servants to call them who were before bidden, then a sending forth other servants to inform them, what an *extraordinary entertainment* was provided, and again to let them know, the meat was on the *Table*, and their *Lord* staid for them, and would not sit down till they were come: and then other *servants* are posted away, some into the *Streets* and *Lanes* of the *City*, to search the very *Lanes* and by *Allies*: where none but persons of the meanest rank dwell or converse; others into the *Country*, into the *Highways*, where may be met *Passengers* of all degrees and qualities: and to the *Hedges* where the *Bees* lye basking, or the *Robbers* lye sculk-

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ing, to hide themselves, or look and wait to catch their prey; and not only tell them they *may come*, if they please; and shall be very welcome: but *invite* them heartily, press them earnestly, to come along with them immediately, and if they be *indifferent*, whether they come or no, urge them and persuade them till you have made them willing, and if they continue still unwilling, even *constrain* and *compel* them to come in, and if when all this is done, some of them make such *excuses*, that nothing will prevail with them, find out others in their room, and give not over, till the *House* be full, and the *Table*, be furnished as plentifully with Guests, as 'tis nobly stored, and even loaden with provisions.

Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no mony come ye, buy and eat, come and buy wine and milk, without mony, and without price, Isa. lv. 1. Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest, Matth. xi. 28. And the whole Bible is, as it were concluded and shut up, with that large and free and earnest invitation, which is so proclaimed, that the whole world is made to ring of it. He that hears first, as being nearest to the
first

Of Deferring Repentance. 105

first sound, having charge to tell it unto others, and call to them that are remote, and out of hearing of the first publishers of it. *The Spirit and the bride, God from Heaven, the Church on Earth say come, And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Rev. xxii. 1-7. And lest any should enlarge what God hath streitned or streitened, what God hath enlarged, and take off from the encouragement, which this invitation gives so universally, to all sinners to repent, and turn, and come in to God; the words next following, may seem to have a peculiar aspect on what is immediately before declared in this *verse*, now set down (tho I would not confine them to that only) *verse* 18. *For I testifie to every one that heareth the words of the prophesie of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this book, that is, if any man shall add to the conditions of this invitation, which assures acceptance to them who thirst, and so thirsting come to God, by Faith and Repentance (if I may, inoffensively subjoyn such a gloss) as if it were so free, as even to exempt sinners from these terms, as necessary for their*

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peace and safety, God will plague that man: then vers. 19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this Prophecy: God shall take away his part out of the Book of life, and out of the Holy City: and from the things which are written in this Book, that is, if any man shall deny any one to be capable of the benefit offered in this, so large and free, and universal, an invitation: who doth thirst after these waters of life, and so thirsting, shall come to them, repenting and believing, and willing and desirous to drink of them. He himself shall have no part in them.

Sixthly. He that is the *Amen*, the true and faithful one, the God that cannot lie, gives you many great and precious promises, which are founded upon his word, that is more firm than the mountains: than the foundations of the Earth: than the Ordinances of Heaven: than the course of day and night in their Seasons: That he will abundantly pardon, that he will heal your back-slidings, and love you freely; that he will blot out your iniquities, as a thick cloud; that he will cast all your Transgressions into the depth of the Sea, even that Ocean of Mercy which hath neither shore nor bottom: that whosoever comes

to him, he will in no wise cast him out. And hundreds more of the like endearing and sweetest signification.

Seventhly. As if it were not enough on his part, to give us leave to be happy, he hath made it our duty to be so, and obliged us by the strictest commands, to that, which will infallibly render us so. He commands all men every where to repent. Act. 17. 30. This is his commandment, that we believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 3. 23. and that believing we might have life by his Name. John 20, 31. And who dare question his sincerity? as if he did not heartily desire, what he so earnestly injoyns?

Eighthly. He steps down from the Throne of the Imperative Mood, to the humble Foot-stool of the Optative. 'Tis a sign of weakness to fall to wishing, and an argument of impotence, to cry O si, O si! to sigh out our Options. And yet the Omnipotent God disdains not to appear to us thus, to shew and express the pathos of his blessed mind, the vehemency with which he desires our good and welfare: Oh that there were such an heart in them, Deut. 5. 29. Oh that they were wise, Deut, 32. 29. Oh that my people had
hearkened

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hearkened unto me, Psal. 81. 13. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments. Isa. 48. 18. Whose heart would it not break, with shame and sorrow, to hear an holy God breathing out the longing desires of his heart, in this wise, that we may be assured of his hearty readiness in accepting us, when we perform, what he wishes with such assumed *passions*, that we would perform?

Nimbly. He stoops yet lower, and does what is infinitely indecent, (I will not say for him to do) but I must say, for us to occasion him to do, and more to suffer him to continue to do; but most of all, to suffer him to do in vain, that is to *intreat us, pray us, woe us, beseech us* to accept his mercy, to *pity* our selves, to be *reconciled* to him, and to accept his pardon, which he offers ready sealed, and to touch that *Golden Scepter*, which he reaches out from Heaven to us. *Abraham* sent but once to take a wife for his Son *Isaac*, from amongst his Kindred, and a short *woing*, by a servant serv'd the turn, when they saw the *Bracelets*, and the *Jewels*, and the *Ear-rings*, and heard the rest reported, how soon do they yield and send away *Rebeckah*? Gen. 24. Yet God sends one *Embassador*, one *Par-*
radymphe,

namph, and *Spokes-man* after another, to woe, to court us to be *Brides* to the true *Isaac*, the *Heir* of all things; who is become our *Kinsman*, and hath all the right imaginable to claim us to himself, and offers more *Dower* than we can ask, to joyncture us in the whole *Land of Promise*, to settle upon us the inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, which fades not away, reserved in *Heaven*: to give us an *eternal Kingdom*: yea, the *eternal King* himself to be our *everlasting Portion*: and is it possible to doubt his willingness to conclude the *Match* after all this?

Tenthly. But to make all sure, beyond all possibility of any rational ground, to remain, to stick and scruple at his heartiest reality, in designing our happiness he adds to all the rest, his *Oath*, which puts an end to *Controversies*. God being willing more abundantly to shew unto the *Heirs of Promise*, the immutability of his *Counsel*, confirm'd it by an *Oath*, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. Heb. 6. 17, 18. Two things, that is his *Promise*, and his *Oath* upon his promise: or, two things, the two by which he swears, his life, his holiness, as if he had said, as true as I am a living God, as true

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true as I am an *holy God*, I will *pardon* you, I will yet *spare* you, if yet at last you bring forth *good fruit*; let me never be esteemed a *living God*, never accounted an *holy God* more, if I do not; or *two things*, (I use this only allusively, I urge it not as the proper meaning of the place) God swears by the *two Sacraments*; for a *Sacrament* is an *Oath*. As truly as this *water*, which I now touch, and lay my hand upon, will *wash* what is foul, and make it clean, soak what is hard, and make it soft, *quench* what is kindled, and put out its burning, *refresh* what is scorched, and make it fruitful, and *slack* his thirst who drinks it, and cheer and revive his spirits; so shall the *Blood and Spirit* of my Son, which I will pour out upon all who *thirst* for it, and are willing to receive it, do for them proportionably in their Souls; cleanse, soften, quench, satisfy, and make them fruitful; and as truly as this *Bread* will *nourish* them who eat it, and become the *staff* of their lives, and as truly as this *Wine* will *cheer* the hearts of them that *drink* it, so truly, so certainly, shall the *Body and Blood* of my Son, which I *here* freely and heartily offer to you, *nourish* and *cherish* you unto *eternal life*, if you will indeed by faith receive it, and feed upon it. Ele-

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Eleventhly. He will make your Estate, as happy as if you had come sooner, provided you come now in earnest, without more delay: *They received every one a penny, and there are last who shall be first.*

Twelfthly. He'll not twit you, or upbraid you with your coming late. He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Nay, he will himself be thy Apologist, and against them who reproach thee for labouring but one hour, he will plead thy Cause, *Friend, I do thee no wrong, is thy eye evil, because I am good? Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? I will give to this last, as unto thee.* Matth. 20. 14.

This is a little of the much, that might be said upon this Argument, a little of that mellow prolifick earth, to be laid to your Roots, God Almighty set it home by the hand of his own Spirit, and in his name I do assure you, if either this digging, or this dunging, these threatenings, or those promises, either singly, or both joyntly, prevail to make you yet fruitful: God will assuredly spare you, and repeal his sentence given out against you. But then you must do it quickly. *Agree with thy Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him: Look upon this as the last year of Gods patience*

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to this Church, and to thy self, if thou mend not; nay, as the last day, *To day if ye will hear his voice*; nay, this present now, now, *now is the day of Salvation, now is the accepted time.*

Behold, 'twas a wonder he came so oft, again and again, and 'tis a wonder, a miracle of mercy, he hath added another years patience in our circumstances, therefore now, lay hold upon God, that he depart not, now catch hold of his hand, which is lift up to fetch the fatal stroak, and catch, and hold it fast, before the blow fall; by faith, by prayer, and by repentance. Happy we, 'tis not too late already, the next may never be, or may be too late: *When the master of the House is once risen, when the door is lock'd, when the Market is over, and the Shops are shut up; 'tis then too late, and in vain to endeavour that which might have been dispatch'd with ease in convenient season.* Who knows but some of you would next year, nay, next week, nay, it may be too morrow give ten thousand worlds, if you had them, to redeem the opportunities you now enjoy, to have the offers made you again, I am now making you in the Name of a most Gracious God, and be in a capacity to receive them.

Oh.

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Oh therefore for God, for Christ's sake, for the Churches sake, for Posterity sake, and for your own souls sake, improve this year, this month, this very day, and moment: to resolve to be presently fruitful, and to fulfil those Resolutions.

But know, that as your acceptance of this last *invitation*, shall blot out the remembrance of all your former *Refusals*. So your adding another *refusal* to your too many former ones, will *aggravate* them, and multiply your *guilt*, and God's wrath, as a third and fourth figure, added to two before them, multiplies *Unites* and *Tens* into *Hundreds* and *Thousands*. And your *despising* the Riches of his Goodness, Long-suffering and Forbearance, and refusing to be led to repentance by them will prove a *treasuring* up unto yourselves whole *stores* of *wrath*, against the *day of wrath*, from which God grant your speedy and sincere *Repentance*, and bringing forth *fruits* meet for it, in amendment of life, (which alone can do it.) may effectually deliver you. *Amen.*

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